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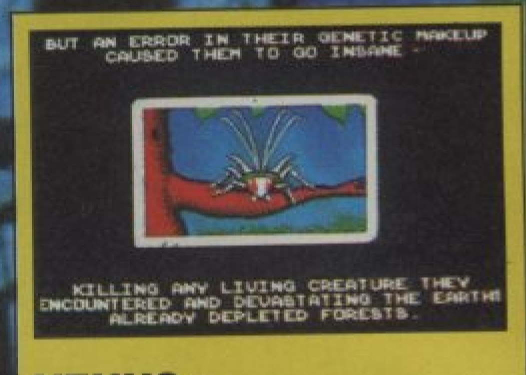


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INTERACTION

RISE OF THE DRAGON...14

Paul Rigby has discovered a future that's dirty, violent and drug-ridden. Join him as he explores life in 2053 with Dynamix's graphical masterpiece *Rise of the Dragon*.



GAMES INDEX

SECRET OF THE SILVER BLADES

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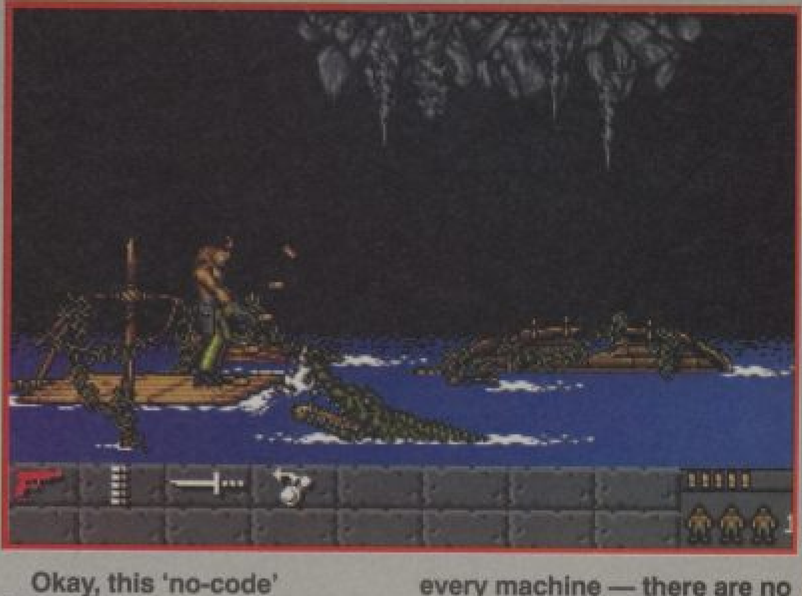
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BOOT-UP

KINETIC ENERGY

Old programmers never die, they just work on more advanced systems. Or so seems the case with ex-Imagine programmer, David Lawson, and his newly-formed software developers Kinetica...



Liverpool are quite a good football team, Paul Getty had a bob or two, Leonardo Da Vinci could draw a bit, Gold of the Aztecs is a platform game written by Kinetica — life is full of understatements...

Take the Kinetica example. What's so special about a platform game? Seen one, seen 'em all. Nothing new. Yawn. Fine. But I forget to mention that the game contains 26Mbs of graphics — and yet the game contains no code? Yep, the game is, in effect, empty. I neglected to say that the animation is superb, the game 'sprites' are... well, I don't think 'enormous' conveys the effect. More like, '!?!?!'. However, this platform game contains one revolutionary feature which I have never seen in any platform game to date: depth. I'd advise any platform fanatics to look that one up, they won't have come across the word very often.

Now hang on, hang on — I can see you all have lots and lots of questions so let's grab, in the nicest possible way, David Lawson of Kinetica and try to persuade him to divulge.

Okay, this 'no-code' business. How can a game run with no code, for goodness sake?! 'Gold is put together in a sort of graphical environment. You've seen an Apple Mac? You've seen the way you point and click with the mouse? Well that's how you put the game together, you point and click. You don't need a programmer to put it together. In addition, once the game is written it runs on every machine — there are no conversions, therefore, apart from redrawing some of the graphics — which is done by linking another machine (Amiga, ST, etc) to the Mac propriety system and using it as a colour output device. This system effectively turns other computers into peripherals. So you'll know what the graphics will look like on that particular machine.'



Interesting but evasive. Going back to the original question — actually there is a very small piece of code which runs the game, the heart of the system. However, this is pretty tiny and does not answer the question. In fact, our Dave wouldn't answer the question of the 'empty game' directly — but can you blame him?

'The problem with games is that it is the programmers who write them. But programmers are not always creative. Artists usually are. So they can sit down and draw the game whilst doing the equivalent of programming it — without needing to have the programming knowledge.'

Sounds like we've reached Utopia! Further, you can modify the game and expect instant changes. So each artist can play around with the game to their heart's content. There are 26,000 individual

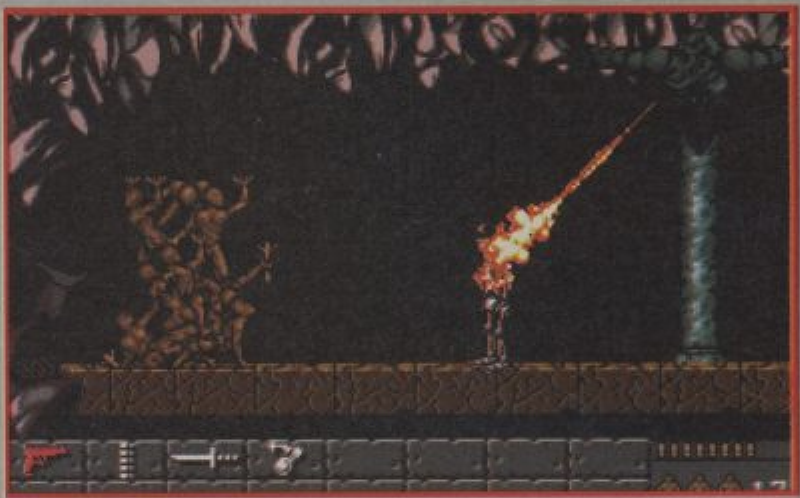


propriety software. The team decided to see how far they could push the system. 'We then sat down and thought that it would make quite a good game. We designed all of the screens, interactions, etc, just to exercise the software. To create a game that would be impossible to do by hand.'

They pushed the system so far that it grew and grew, becoming more and more complex — a regular Frankenstein! The reason for the platform game idea was the challenge to create a human form that moves around the screen in an intelligent manner. The jigsaw system was developed to achieve this end.

Every section of the game is totally different. One section sees you in the jungle, this bit is very

pieces of graphics in Gold which make up the game. This gives a clue to how the animation is controlled. The graphics are individually created using DeluxePaint 3, and then they are passed down a sort of assembly line — each person, in turn, improving, adding, enhancing, until the game is created. Take the hero, for example, who can do over 300 separate things (1500 frames of animation). The hero was initially drawn doing a number of actions. From this basis a construction set was created. So as the hero walks across the screen he's made of boots, two lower legs, kneecaps, two upper legs, the





torso in three parts, belt, gun, pouch, sword on his back, upper and lower arms, hands and a head. This 'jigsaw' system saves enormous amounts of memory.

The plot is fairly basic, you're an Indiana Jones-type hero who is after the — all together now — gold of the Aztecs! The game idea began as a test program for the

arcadey; the next section is a platform stage, swinging from ropes, etc; and the next section you're confronted with a heap of puzzles. Actually this variation of play was one of the features I liked, the other was the integration of puzzles. This makes Gold of the Aztecs a game which will span a variety of tastes. As you play

DAVE LAWSON: YEAR ONE

After igniting his computer interests with a Cambridge Mk.14 (Uncle Clive's very first computer) David entered the hallowed halls of Bug-Byte were he developed the first commercial products for the VIC-20 (*Vic Men*, written on an Atari 8-bit machine and converted to the VIC in a day), the BBC (*Spacewarp*) and, probably, the Spectrum (*Spectral Invaders*). In fact *Spectral Invaders* was available before anyone had actually received a Spectrum! The game, believe it or not, being written solely via reference from the first copy of the Spectrum manual.

David's interest in the computer business as a whole led him into other aspects of game production — he was part of the very first telesales network for the UK, for example.

However, it was when David Lawson co-founded the groundbreaking software house Imagine that he was forced into the limelight. These were the days of the computer whizz-kid. The lad who made a million by the time he was 16, owned a Ferrari, and lived the high-life. However, there appears to be more fiction than fact written about the Liverpudlian company. David explains: 'There were a lot of unfounded rumours about Imagine. It's like most of the stories seen in the Sunday papers. Most of it was invented just to create a good story.'

From the ashes of Imagine, Psygnosis was born, and again David was the first with a 16-bit game, on the ST. The game was *Baratticus*, a product that was reputedly all that was left of Imagine's megagame *Bandersnatch*. Regardless of its origin, the game was visually impressive, if not that addictive.

However, Psygnosis now deal more in commissioning products, enhancing and marketing them for final sale. This was one of the reasons for Lawson's departure, product development (actually creating the games themselves) being more his forte. This is what forming Kinetica was all about, that and developing their revolutionary propriety game creation systems. As David says himself: 'Kinetica is technology driven'.



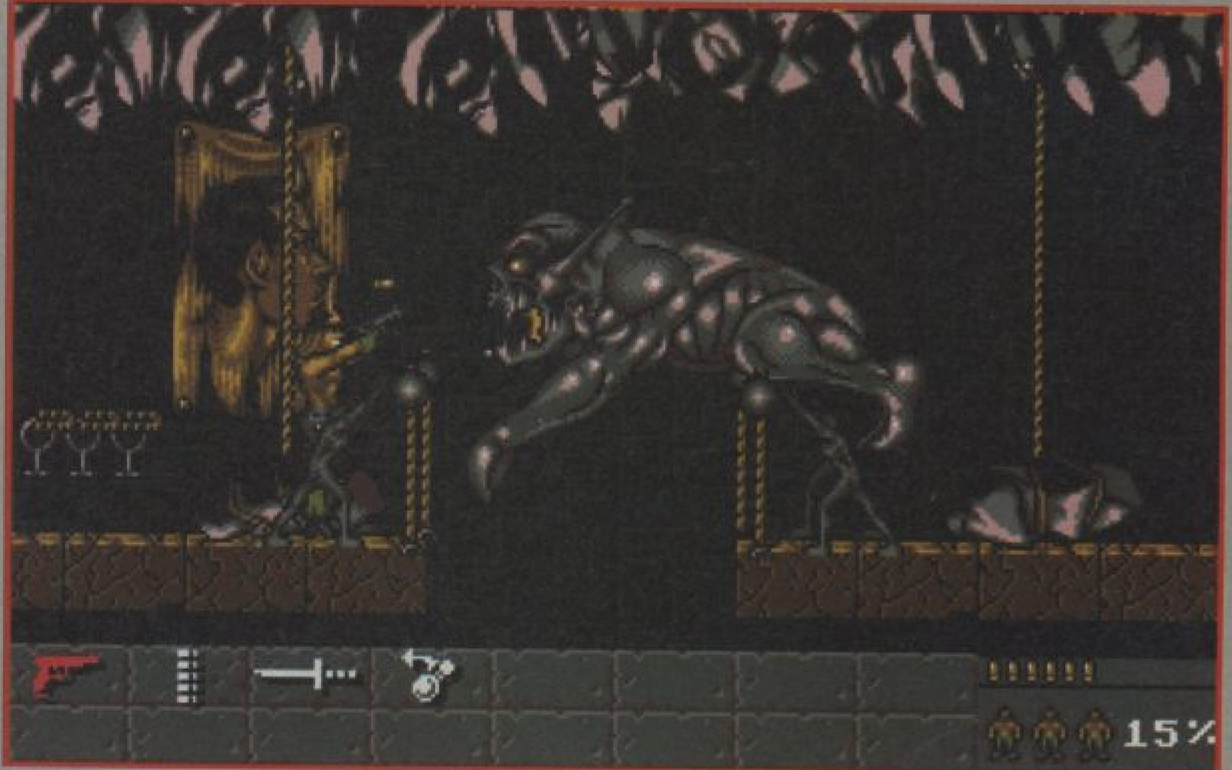
Gold the game builds, becoming more difficult to play.

'The final section of the game takes place in a tomb (it does at the moment anyway, the plot's always changing). Every room is filled with mechanical contraptions. Constructed as you would expect a 400-year-old mechanical contraption to be. There are plenty of stone cogs and everything is worked by sand-falls, waterwheels and things. For example, you'll walk into a room, see this contraption in front of you and know if you walk forward it is going to go off, the cogs will start spinning you'll be trapped and killed. So you'll have to figure out how to disable it!'

Other highlights? There are plenty, but there is one sequence which may or may not stay in the final version. It shows a young lady who is lying on a slab when a nearby statue comes to life and promptly bites her head off! All the carvings on the statue then come to life and start eating each other, in the meantime the statue moves around. As David says, 'He is huge. He really is big. Much bigger than the elephant.'

Oh, didn't I mention the elephant? It, and all the other characters, have been created using a similar 'jigsaw' technique. Sound is created by the prolific David Whittaker, with nine individual pieces.

Anyone who has an Amiga, ST and PC will be able to play Gold. Hopefully, one or two console versions will follow, although they haven't been specified at the time of writing.





I must admit that platform games have never been my cup of tea. Shadow of the Beast was very handy to show off my Amiga, but actually playing it? Well, no. Gold on the other hand has for the first time whetted my appetite.

I am sure its general appeal will ensure its rip-roaring success. Never mind the advanced technology behind it. Lawson's back in town — watch out.

kinetica

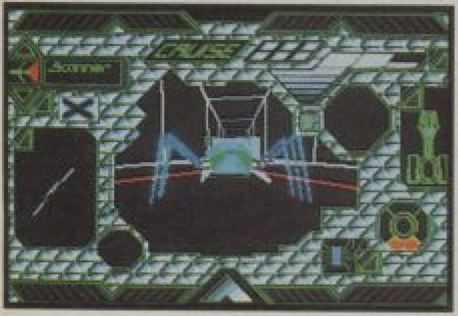


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MAGIC FLY

Magic Fly? Sounds awfully like a dismal fairy tale about a young boy whose only friend is Martin the Magic Fly. But it's not, thank heavens! *Magic Fly* is, in fact, a new search and destroy game from Electronic Arts.

In the distant future, where spacecraft resemble tarantulas and scorpions, there is an elite group called the Magic Fly



squadron, of which you're a member. Your quest is to track down and destroy the Ceti Triad organisation's HQ and locate the plans for their new prototype fighter. Featuring solid 3-D graphics, with over 30 different types of alien craft to destroy, *Magic Fly* is out on the ST and Amiga in August.

PSYGNOSIS FIVE

Shiny packaging and snoot artwork is soon to be the order of the day, once again, at the Psygnosis office. There are five titles lined up and ready to rage on the 16-bits: *Nitro, Dr Mallet, Walker, Beast II* and *Awesome*.

Nitro is a race game, viewed from overhead with you belting along the many courses (on road and cross-country tracks) and hopefully thrashing the competing racers. Increase the power of your car by adding components, bought with prize money, to make it the meanest turbo machine around! Out on the ST at the end of July, with the Amiga version following in August.

Here's a strange game to come from Psygnosis, it's called *Dr Mallet*. Set in a chocolate factory, your unenviable job is to protect chocolate drop creatures from the evil Dr Mallet and his stonking great hammer. When playing *Dr Mallet*, Psygnosis reckons it's just like watching a cartoon! Wait until October and see for yourself on the ST and Amiga.

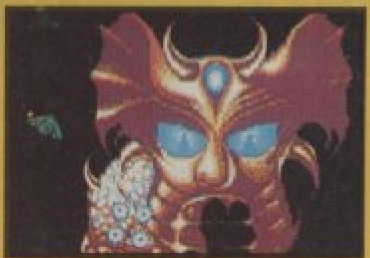
Blasting action is on the way in *Walker*, a scrolling shoot-'em-up featuring a huge battle Walker. Though *Walker* is still



in the early stages of development, our man on the case reported that 'you may be able to walk in and out of the screen, or you may not — but the head moves nicely'. We'll keep you informed on the progress of *Walker* as it nears its release date in December.

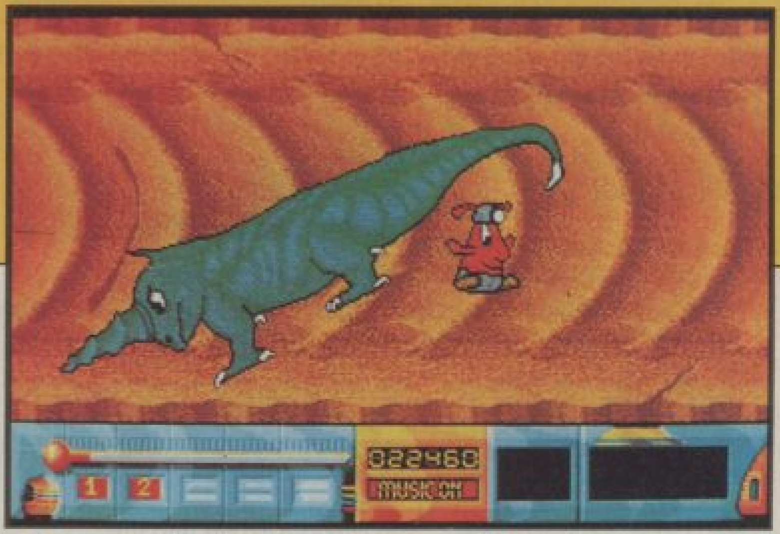
The Beast is back — or is it simply its shadow? No matter, the sequel to one of Psygnosis's most successful products is heading your way on the Amiga. Promising more to do, deeper puzzles and generally increased interaction, *Shadow of the Beast 2* is planned for a release in October.

And finally, the long-awaited *Awesome* is just around the proverbial software corner. What does it offer? Being an epic space game, there's heaps of stuff to shoot, with



plenty of interplanetary trading to keep you thinking. Sounds familiar, what's so different about *Awesome*? Rather than being a filled-polygon 3-D game, the graphics are 2-D with lots of smashing sprites!

Psygnosis have heaps more new titles in the pipes, look out for *Pugsy*, *Tempus* and *Aquaventura* popping up in the previews soon.





YOLANDER

Logotron's recently-launched entertainment label Millenium hopes to follow the success of *Resolution 101* with the launch of *Yolander*: the toughest, meanest, fastest platform game created (it says here). *Yolander*'s designer is Steve Bak who, back in the mists of time, created the crazy and chaotic C64 platform game *Hercules*. Now then, *Yolander* is the offspring of Hercules, so that means... Yup! *Yolander*, the game, is the 1990 remix of *Hercules*. There are 12 tasks to complete and it's pretty zany because you never know where the platforms are going to appear! However, we do know that *Yolander* should appear towards the end of July on the ST and Amiga, priced at £19.99.

COMMANDO WAR: Cor! Looks a bit good, this. It's *Commando War* from Titus, the first in a series of eight games using Titus's latest games creation system. Command a unit of 12 soldiers, playing against a second player, in an attempt to capture as much enemy land as possible. Out on the 16-bits very soon.



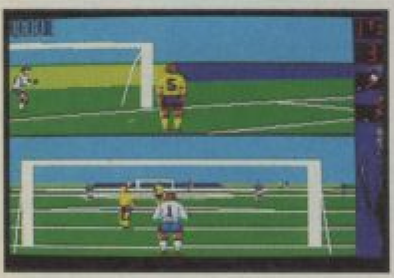


MR DO! RUN RUN

Mr Do!, he's doing the do on the ST and Amiga soon in his madcap arcade game *Mr Do! Run Run* from Electrocoin. Mr Do! is a clown trapped in a world of monsters and his only defence is a crystal ball. Yikes! Get him popping the pills on each level so he can escape to the next, and don't forget to gobble the fruit to build up extra bonus points. *Mr Do! Run Run* is just one of the many classic old-but-gold games Electrocoin have lined up for the next few months on the ST and Amiga. The price? A snip at £14.95 each!



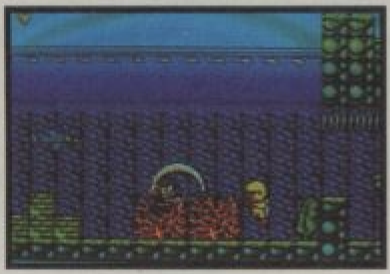
CADAVER: The Bitmap Brothers are still working hard on their isometric arcade adventure *Cadaver*, due to be 'the game of 1990' (hem, hem). Out from Imageworks on ST, Amiga and PC in September.



I PLAY 3-D SOCCER

Italian software house Simulmondo is to release its games in the UK, the first of which is the oddly-titled *I Play 3-D Soccer*. Simulmondo reckon it's a masterpiece, it took two years to program and was created by a team of nine continental coders. *I Play 3-D Soccer* features 64 different European clubs, simultaneous two-player action (with up to 64 players), and goes on release in October for the C64, Amiga, Atari ST and PC.

SEGA TREATS



With the official release of the Mega Drive in September, there are no signs that Sega are losing interest in the Master System. Indeed, here's news of three forthcoming releases you can plug in and play. The classic roleplaying game *Ultima IV* is on its way, with *Alex Kidd in Shinobi World* and the scrolling shoot-'em-up *Freedom Fighter* in hot pursuit. As usual, the Sega trio are being distributed by Virgin.

INFOGRAMES INFO

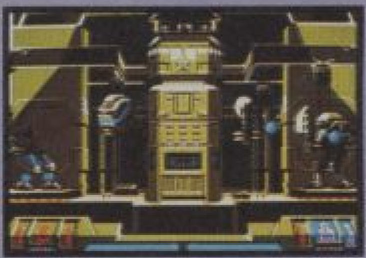
As they say in France, 'Worra line-up'! (Er, are you sure about that? — Ed.) French software house Infogrames have a bundle of digital delights up their sleeves. For a start, *Drakkhen*, the fantasy



game, is appearing on the, hey, FM Towns! Sadly, not everyone has one yet, so let's have a quick run through the five titles appearing on the ST, Amiga and PC before the end of the year.

Murder in Space is a detective and simulation game set aboard an orbital space station. Not only are there crimes to solve but you also have to take control of the space station!

Metal Masters lets you create your own robotic fighting machine which can be entered into battle arena contests or constructed especially to compete in sporting events — the objective is to build the best and win the most.



Eagle's Rider is set 5,000 years into the future and presents an arcade adventure challenge as you attempt to conquer the universe. Sounds fun.

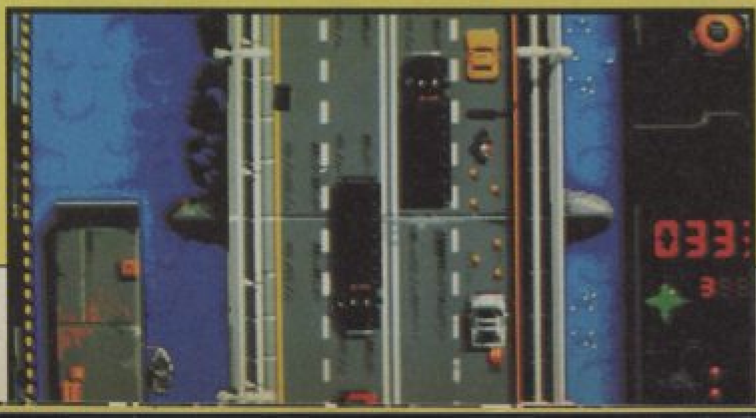
Christmas sees the return of Tintin in a new adventure: *TinTin with the Incas*. Joined by Captain Haddock, Professor Calculus and Snowy the dog (woof woof), Tintin gets to grips with the curse of King Pachacamac (say it). Lastly, there's this strange thing called *Alpha Waves* — too odd to describe here (it's supposed to help you relax and dream), wait for the review.





THE SPY WHO LOVED ME

September is the launch date for the latest game in Domark's on-going Bond series. This time 007 stars in *The Spy Who Loved Me* and Domark hope to bring all the excitement of the movie to your screen. Bond, along with beautiful Soviet agent Anya Amasova, has to halt the launch of nuclear missiles. The action starts with three chase sequences: firstly in Q's Lotus Esprit, followed by more fast racing in speedboats and then on to jetskis. After exhausting yourself on those, there's a hand to hand battle with Jaws, the henchman everyone loves to hate. And then there's the little matter of rescuing that Soviet agent... Out on all major 8- and 16-bit formats.



THE BOY WHO

Ever since he fell out of bed as a child, Paul Rigby has wanted to fly. When he received a computer, he first question wasn't 'What's the best arcade game around?', it was more like 'When are they doing a Flight Simulator 1.0 conversion?' So it's not surprising that Paul was the first person knocking on the door of Dynamix when they released news of Red Baron and other new products



■ Rise Of The Dragon's stunning graphic scenes are produced using a combination of pencil, watercolour and airbrush. The end product being very beautiful 'paintings' that are colour-scanned into a PC.

I've been looking forward to this one for some time. Chiefly because of the innovative way Dynamix write flight sims — *A10 Tank Killer* being a fine example. Using their 3-Space polygon system, with *Red Baron* Dynamix have re-created the characters of the actual aces who flew at the time, complete with favourite manoeuvres etc.

There will be 15 separate aircraft in this sim. Each with their own flight model! In addition, each aircraft will have their own structural models!! This was deemed necessary due to the fragile nature of the bi-planes flown at this time. Many had their own quirks, design faults and so on. (Fly a Fokker Triplane into a steep dive and the wings will rip off.) Engine characteristics have been programmed in too. The Camel's engine, for example, increased altitude during right-hand turns, lowering it on left-hand turns.

Cockpits have been digitised from rare original WW1 aircraft or via mockups and photos



■ In Dynamix's Red Baron fly high and keep the skies clear of Fokkers (ho, ho).



(from a choice of 400,000!) downloaded from laser disk catalogues provided by the Smithsonian Institute in America.

A campaign option will only cater for a 'personal' victory. That is, if you play on the German side, your side will still lose the war. However, *you* can still 'win' as you are judged by your record. The large campaign starts at the beginning of the war with relatively poor equipment. You are given better equipment as and when that piece of equipment becomes historically available.

Other features include unique, hand-signal communications from fellow aviators during formation flying (who will be digitally animated). Signals will interpret as attack, retreat, etc. Missions include dogfighting, balloon-busting, Zeppelin hunts, bomber escort and night raids.

RISE OF THE DRAGON

Rise of the Dragon is big. The final version will fill around eight high-density disks. You'll get about 8Mb of info on there with VGA and EGA graphics. If the game had run over normal low-density disks the total, with just VGA artwork, would be 20 disks! The extensive art, done by a professional comic illustrator, was scanned in via PC.

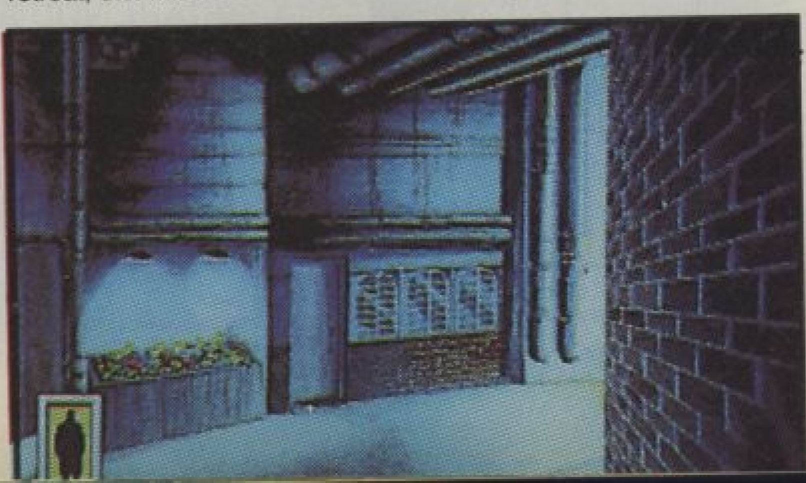
Life on Earth 2053 has taken a turn for the worst. The atmosphere resembles that 'down and dirty' feel of the film *Bladerunner*. Overcrowding, global food shortages, severe drug abuse and a corrupt police force mix with the high-tech images of hover cars and supersonic ground transports.

A new drug, Methylthiazonine, is doing the rounds. Contained in a stick-on patch, you place it onto a bare patch of skin (often behind the ear). However a new sub-type of the drug has begun to appear which contains a lethal virus.

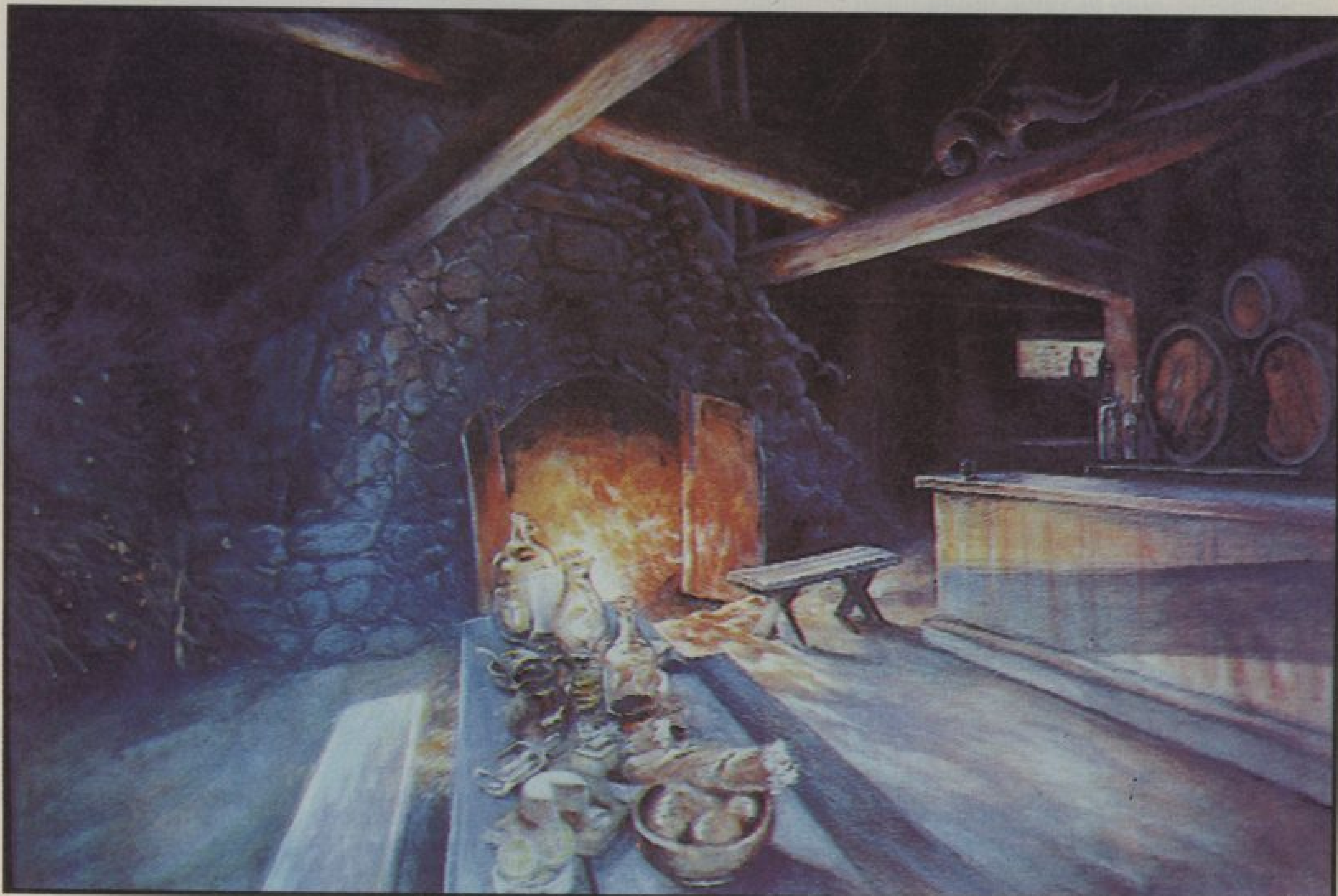
You hit the patch.... The drug enters your bloodstream... You hit a tremendous 'high' from the drug — but the virus takes over... Producing mutation, insanity and, ultimately, death.

A drug lord, Deng Hwang, is behind the drug. He is the ancient betrayer, the bringer of chaos, as foretold by the prophecy.

Dragon has been produced within a HyperCard-type environment. Using the GDS (Game Development System), the whole game is point and click, integrating invisible screen 'buttons' that activate commands (animation, sound, etc). Complex menu trees constitute the interactivity with characters. However, conversation is non-linear, it has a variety of different endings.



COULD FLY



■ Produced within a HyperCard-type environment, Rise of the Dragon's code eats up a staggering 8 Mb of memory.

The game itself is also non-linear, you have the ability to wander the game world for hours, looking at objects (which can be picked up) and investigating people without making the slightest progress. The design brief, therefore, intends to offer tremendous freedom of movement, freedom of play and a feeling of the wonder of discovery when you make progress.

HEART OF CHINA

Heart of China is also based on the GDS. The only difference between *Rise of the Dragon* and *Heart of China* is that *China* overlays digitised images of human actors and actresses over the artwork whereas *Dragon* is totally hand-drawn.

The plot surrounds a 1930s action adventure story. You are a down-and-out WW1 pilot, 'Lucky' Jake Masters. Your task is to rescue the kidnapped daughter of a very powerful man who has made one or two enemies over in China.

You end up trekking all over the world (Istanbul, Paris, Honk Kong, etc). Besides yourself, there are two major characters. Kate Lomax, the woman you're rescuing, and Chi, a ninja sidekick. Character viewpoints change in the game depending on what's happening. So if Jake is thrown in jail, the story changes from his viewpoint to Kate or Chi as they figure out a way to rescue him.

The one aspect that Dynamix continually emphasised during the collation of these previews was that neither *China* or *Dragon* are anything like *David Wolf: Secret Agent* — their first impressive foray into interactive movies. Both of the new games will be far more interactive than *David Wolf* ever was. There will be no sitting back and watching long periods of 'movie' action in the new games. The new releases contain a wholly new game system which promises to continually involve the player.

STELLAR SEVEN



This a re-make of an original wireframe, monochrome game which borrowed many of the ideas from the original *Battlezone* arcade game, but with more strategy.

The new version introduces solid 3-D graphics with bitmapped backgrounds rendered (hand-drawn, airbrushed then scanned into the game) in glorious light-sourced, VGA with Roland/Adlib sound support on the PC.

MONKEY B

There's something strange going on in Chicago. It's could be the fact that the town's full of computer types for the Consumer Electronics Show. Even so, there's something very, very unusual about the place. Marshal 'Monkey' Rosenthal is on the case...

It's not often that you step off the elevator to be greeted by a number of brittle skeletons. And you don't normally see treasure chests surrounded by pirates — who seem to have stopped off at the Jolly Roger to quaff a few ales — shouting hearty 'arhahs' (Jim lad) on one of your hotel floors. Along with fellow bemused journalists, I move over to the Scum Bar, order some grog (served in dirty mugs), take a few sips and sit down to reflect on the sequence of events that have led me to this very strange Lucasfilm party.

It was at the last Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas that I first approached Lucasfilm's Ron Gilbert (author of *Maniac Mansion* and *Zak McKraken*) about his next game. All he blurted out in a moment of candor was that it will be funny and full of swashbuckling entertainment. Attempts to get specifics were greeted by a stony silence, which, to be fair, might have also been a result of all the champagne consumed that night.

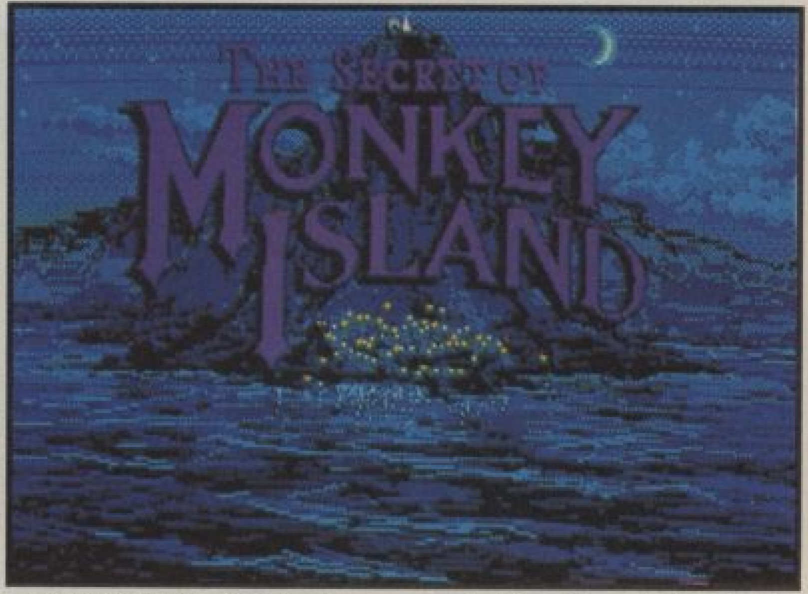
Over the next months, Ron was under continued pressure to give this fact-hungry journalist more information. He eventually cracked. 'Okay,' says Ron, 'meet me at Chicago CES, the Friday night before the show opens and I'll tell all.' It was agreed. I called the detective agency and cancelled the surveillance on him.

Chicago: Friday night. Here we are in the dimly lit depths of the underground parking garage at the Hilton Hotel. Me, Ron, a 386 PC, a 12-inch monitor, and the only working electrical outlet in the whole damn place. Ron does the boot-up honours, and presents *The Secret of Monkey Island*. Set in the age of piracy in the Caribbean, a twisting plot surrounds our young hero (no name yet) as he arrives fresh and wet behind the ears from England to the port of Melee. His desire: to become a successful pirate, wealthy beyond all dreams.

Which can only be accomplished by performing three tasks: defeating the Sword Master, finding the buried treasure, and becoming a Master Thief by stealing from the Governor's Mansion. None of which is going to be easy, since none of the pirates hold any respect for you.

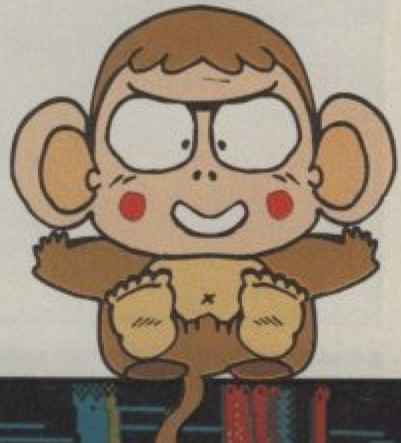
'Add to the above that there are some very weird things nobody is talking about,' says Ron. 'None of these pirates seem to want to leave the island, they're all afraid of some talk about a ghost ship sailing the sea. Taking some time to find out what's going on here might prove as useful as the quest to become a successful pirate.

'Keep in mind that we're striving for humour here,' notes Ron. 'The one-liners are more lethal than the pirates could ever be — they're a bunch of great guys that reek of cartoonism. In real life you



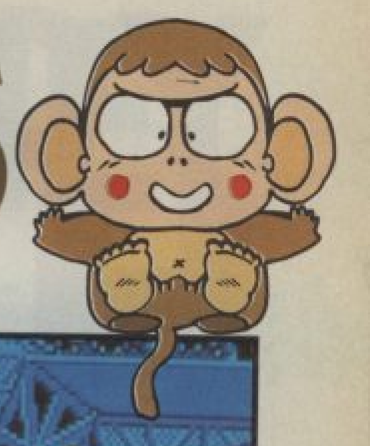
wouldn't have wanted to ever get too close, especially if your sense of smell was good. And you're not penalised for being humorous either — you can say silly things, yet still get the information needed to progress in the game.' Ron also lets slip that one of the pirate characters looks 'pretty familiar' to anyone who has played Lucasfilm's *Loom*.

Now a bit about those three quests. There aren't any arcade sequences in *Monkey Island*, so you have to defeat the Sword Master with your rapid wit, not a dagger or cutlass. Options appear when you confront her (yep, she's mighty tough), and it's those choices that will affect the outcome of the fight. This is true throughout the game as you can talk to almost every single character





BUSINESS



found — and conversations are mighty important in order to find out what's going on.

But what about treasure, Ron, spanish doubloons, diamonds, rubies, pearls and all that stuff? 'Finding gold and other good stuff means looking about, but the best way to find it is to put out to sea; and that means assembling a crew, *and* buying a ship. Which brings more problems than you realise — the guy to deal with acts like a used car salesman! (I mean, whoever stops to consider options like a barnacle-free coating for the hull?) Then there's the Governor, who just happens to be the kind of woman you're looking for. She likes you too, soooo... Of course she has to go and get kidnapped by the ghost ship. Just your luck, huh?

'So you decide to go after her in the best tradition of being a hero, er pirate,' he notes. 'And that means heading for *Monkey Island* — which is far from being deserted. First you'll have to sail there, taking on other ships and firing cannons, without getting sunk. More happens on the island, but that would be telling.'

While Ron rests from divulging so much, here's a few game specs. No external storyboard devices (like the



tape/CD for *Loom*) are included — it's easy to get the plot from the first few screens. There's high resolution images, of course, combined with great animation. Part of what makes a game 'seamless' is in what you don't see — like an interface that does its job, but keeps out of the gamer's face. Continuing the point 'n' click style found in *Maniac Mansions, Indiana Jones* and *Loom*, and refined along the way, all actions can be performed by just using the onscreen pointer, there's no typing whatsoever.

The art and music is as highly detailed as ever, being the result of Steve Purcell and Mark Ferrari. 'Besides the various sound effects, there's support for Adlib and Roland boards on the IBM.'

But there is a new and highly noticeable feature: proportional scaling. Characters increase and decrease in size as they move towards and away from the foreground — even on the diagonal. All without any noticeable effect on the speed. Watching this — with animation still in effect at all time — is worth the price of admission alone.

Ron continues: 'Puzzle-solving exists of course, but it's designed to advance the game, not stop you dead in your tracks. First-time adventurers will feel comfortable here, while the more experienced can move about a bit more to locate areas of interest not readily apparent. The game is about having fun, it's almost impossible to get killed — just don't go jumping off cliffs. Remember to look everywhere, do as much as you can. Bars are a good place to pick up information, just don't be too conspicuous if you're not prepared to back up your play. As I mentioned before, there's a subtle sub-plot which can be discovered. I'm building the sequel around this — it's not important to playing the game, but it can give you a bit of advanced notice for next time. My final comment: There's more strange things going on with ships that you might think!'

Cars start streaming into the parking lot. Guess we've been here a bit too long. Ron picks up his stuff and takes off, muttering about a party he has to attend. One he didn't see fit to tell me about. Good thing I picked his pocket earlier and took the invitation.

My mind swirls with the thought as the effects of the alcohol begins to pass and I return to reality. Which is kind of scary — let's just lift this eye patch off that joker asleep in the corner. Snap it on for a monocular effect, and it's back to the Scum Bar for another round of grog.



***The Secret of Monkey Island* is the latest game from Lucasfilm to exploit their innovative menu system. Previous adventures to use this user-friendly technique include the successful *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade Graphic Adventure* (above), *Maniac Mansion* and *Loom*. There is absolutely no typing whatsoever, just point at an object and click on an action. Lucasfilm predict that all adventures will be like this one day. If arcade players are to be converted to adventures, more companies will have to follow Lucasfilm.**

YOU NEED HANDS

Whoever said a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush got it completely wrong. Of course, a bird in the hand is worth sod all. However, the latest console in your hand is worth the adoring gaze of the world's computer press. Currently under the spotlight are Japanese giants, NEC. And it was at the latest Consumer Electronics Show in Chicago that Marshal M Rosenthal caught up with them, 'obtained' their latest fun-bundle and sneaked off behind the screens to bring you this hands-on report...

The Eighties was the decade of the true portable. Within the past years, we've seen a revolution in `on the move' entertainment. Personal stereos were commonplace, and when those little 3-inch TVs arrived heads turned. Also around were Game and Watches, soon followed by single-game LCD hand-helds. However, it was not until 1989 that the portables market exploded.

Early on in the year, Sony launched their impressive Video Walkman (a Video 8 recorder and TV for £799 — and the size of a VHS videocassette). Throughout the year, Casio and Citizen were releasing numerous mini-TVs with colour displays for under a £100. Then, when summer came, the games explosion occured. Nintendo — who had for so long



relied on their successful Famicon — unveiled the Game Boy: a small, unobtrusive machine that soon peaked a million sales, and put Nintendo back in the gamesplayer's mind. But, in an attempt to beat the competition to the shop shelves, Nintendo had sacrificed one important element: colour. Americans don't look at colour as `a nice extra, if you can afford it'. To American kids, colour is a God-given right. Still, there was Super Marioland on the Game Boy, so things weren't that bad... until Atari announced the 4096-colour Lynx, that is. The ball was back in Nintendo's court, and rumours started to surface concerning a *colour* Game Boy...

Meanwhile, back in Japan, NEC, who had just cracked the US market with their PC Engine (resized and redubbed the TurboGrafx-16), were quietly working on a hand-held that would turn the portable console market upside-down. Time for Marshal `Dick' Rosenthal to take on the case.

MARSHAL FILES: CASE OF THE NEC HAND-HELD

After managing to smuggle out the PC Engine hand-held, codenamed TurboExpress, I was interested to know why NEC were so confident that this bag of goodies was going to put a massive dent in the sales of both Atari and Nintendo. So, as I returned to headquarters, complete with a new set of batteries, I locked the door behind me and prepared to take the sucker to bits.

Like Atari's Lynx, this little baby is one cool dude. Beautifully moulded in matte black plastic, it almost resembles the Sony Video Walkman — but with the screen slightly tilted to cut out reflections and improve definition. Looking below the screen, you could be forgiven for thinking it was the promised colour Game Boy. Same joypad on the left, select and run buttons, and two angled fire buttons. What give it away as an Engine variant are the two adjustable rapid fire switches (commonplace on all PC Engine add-on joypads). Sizewise, it's a touch larger than the Game Boy at 4.3x7.3x1.6 inches.

Around the sides of the TurboExpress are plenty of holes and switches to fiddle with. At the bottom is a port for a link-up cable, on the side the contrast, brightness and volume controls, and earphone and power sockets. Keeping the TurboExpress going shouldn't be any problem as the six penlight batteries last for around four-five hours. There's also a rumour that some new battery conservation circuitry could bump it up to six hours uninterrupted play.

Taking of circuitry, let's take this sucker apart — after all, it's only a prototype worth around £15,000!

Various sounds of cracking plastic as a small screwdriver pries the front of the case from the back.

The electronics inside look real familiar, especially some of the chip components. Hmmm, that's a HUC 6280 microprocessor running the show, cycling at 7.16 Mhz.

The backlit, colour LCD screen measures 2.7 inches diagonally, and it's very sharp and clear — easily as good as the Lynx. It's also cleverly placed in a recess which helps keep out extraneous light (which usually needs constant adjustment of the contrast and brightness).

Pity I can't make much more of all these chips. I suppose I'd better reassemble it...

Er, doesn't quite stay together. Now where's that electrician's tape? Funny how it doesn't fit as good as before, but give me a break, it's not for sale anyway. Now where's that ROM card I `laid my hands on'?

A flick of the switch and... it's showtime! This is one sharp screen. The resolution is a lot tighter than the Lynx, with a matrix of 312x238 pixels. There also seems a fair few colours onscreen. Let's count 'em; there surely can't be more than the Lynx's 16. Umm... 1, 12, 30, 80, 120, 180, 200, 230, 256.

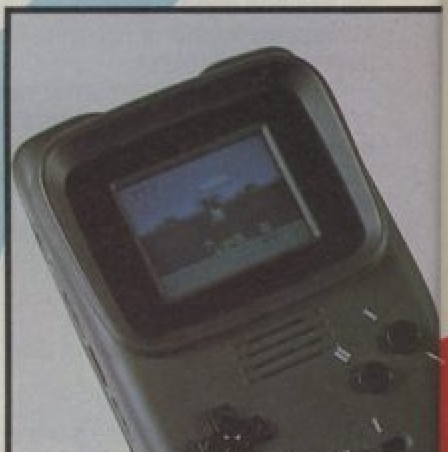
Hey, let's see that ROM card! It doesn't look special, in fact it's just a plain PC Engine card.

That means TurboExpress will run great PC Engine games like *Chase HQ*, *Legendary Axe*, *R-Type*, etc. In fact this small wonder is a mini Engine, complete with stereo sound pulsating through a robust speaker.

The availability of software could, ultimately, make the TurboExpress succeed where the Lynx is faltering. Even the Game Boy, with all of Nintendo's licensees, has only mustered 30-odd games so far. Still, Atari have got till December to get another 40 games out if they're to match the Express when it comes out after Christmas. NEC hope there'll be around 100 games for it by the end of the year.

The Express plays just like the Engine. Even with innumerable large sprites on screen, the Express keeps running smoothly. The expansion port allows just two Expresses to be linked together (the Lynx allows eight — if you can find seven friends who all have the same game as you, and want to play it at the same time!). Game cards allowing two player games will have special `hooks' in the software detecting whether they are running in the TurboExpress or the normal PC Engine.

If that wasn't enough, NEC are also releasing an optional TV tuner with its own antennae and video sockets. Yup, that's right, a



console and TV in one. Whatever next? (Films on ROM card? — Ed.)

Of course, the waiting for its release is pretty annoying, but what makes it worse is that the TurboExpress is only compatible with American PC Engine (TurboGrafx-16) games. The cards available in the UK are all Japanese imports so none will work with the present TurboExpress — the pin configuration is different. Still, NEC are bound to bring out a Japanese version soon, so save the tears.

The TurboExpress will retail in the US for around £150, with the TV tuner an optional extra at approximately £50. NEC hope to launch by Christmas, which is quite possible,as both the software and hardware are now finished.

IT'S SHOWTIME!

Who said life as an American contributor was easy? They don't know the half of it. Look at Marshal M Rosenthal for instance. The poor chap has had to travel all the way from New York to Chicago just to spend day after day being wined and dined by the money-burdened companies exhibiting at the latest Consumer Electronics Show. He can't even pop home at night: sometimes dossing down at expensive parties or plush hotels. In fact, he was so busy, he only had a few moments to spare when he rang the TGM offices earlier this month. So what's up, Marsh?

Brring, brring. Brring, brring. Hi there, Marshal here. You want to know what's going on here at CES? What isn't! There are more games and more exciting products than ever before.

How about nine new ones for the Lynx! Amongst them,



Slimeworld, where eight players can simultaneously explore an endless labyrinth. On the other hand, you could try working your way through 50,000 square feet of Nintendo NES and Game Boy stuff. In *that* jungle you'll find Bandai's ten-episode *Dick Tracy* and Infocom's new roleplaying adventure game for the NES. Also, Game Boy's *Batman* is hot stuff, so's *Ghostbusters II*. What about playing *Beetlejuice*? Or *Boxing* from Activision, with its unique frontal perspective. And then there's the questionable fun of seeing Game Joy, the Game Boy clone which is probably going to get legally zapped by the big N.

Speaking of amazing peripherals, there's a new version of the Powerglove for the Nintendo — almost weightless and divided into a small gauntlet and a belt pack. Not to forget the super-neat Konami Laser Sight helmet which replaces the Zapper lightgun. You target with a red cross-hair which lights up on the screen. When you need to fire, you just shout into the microphone on the helmet.

DO ME A FAVOUR...

...plug me into a Sega, for 17 companies are now producing software for the Mega Drive. Sega are putting the big bucks money behind their Michael Jackson licence *Moonwalker*, which contains some awesome animation.

If animation's your forte, then get a look at the *Animation Studio* from Disney's new software label. It's a full-featured anim package for the Amiga with plenty of art samples, examples of common animation techniques, and an 'onion skin' feature that lets you draw new cells while still viewing the old ones.

NEC are still doing their bit for the TurboGrafx-16. There are all the latest releases, like *Splatterhouse*, *Bloody Wolf* and the hilarious *Bonk's Adventure* (known as *PC Kid* in the UK). On CD ROM, watch out for a batch of ICOM simulations almost ready for release.

Meanwhile, in another area of the show, Sierra are showing *Space Quest IV*, *King's Quest V*, and the strange *Keeping Up With Joneses*. However, action-oriented players will opt for the new duo from Dynamix, *Heart of China* and *Blade Runner*, both featuring awesome new graphic interfaces and scanned artwork. All the games *may* appear on CD ROM, as both companies have shown a healthy interest in multimedia, and in Sierra's case even to the point of bringing out a CD ROM drive for MS-DOS computers.

Which, as an aside, makes you want to take another look at Commodore's CDTV.



It doesn't stand for Compact Disk Television as you might think but, strangely, the acronym expands to Commodore Dynamic Total Vision.

But you guys know all about that, and somebody wants to use the pay phone, so I'll see ya. Try me on my cellular number later... *click, brrr...*



FOUR GOLD PIECES

US Gold are preparing for an autumn offensive on the hearts and minds of dedicated games players. As well as our special look at the stunning Gold of the Aztecs, Paul Rigby takes an interested walk past the monitors in the development vaults of Birmingham's biggest software company...



VAXXINE

Poor ol' Adrian Stephens, author of Vaxxine, was verbally assaulted by yours truly who, in a desperate effort to grab some white-hot info, blasted Ade with 4,323 questions in 22 seconds flat. Here are a few of the more legible noises Mr Stephens could muster. Not bad under the circumstances. 'A plot? Erm, er. Yeah, there's a plot. Erm...'

This was a remarkably good effort from our Adrian as he wasn't really responsible for the plot at all. What he did tell me, though, was that you must defend bases from nasties. Not too dissimilar to *Defender*.

The game takes many of the elements that *E-Motion* had. For instance, on the 3-D landscape are coloured balls which occasional bump into each other. When they do, they connect to each other with a piece of string and run off in search of your bases. The *E-Motion* connection? 'It was a nice routine, it looked pretty in 3-D, so we thought, why not?' However, as you are not dealing with 320x200 pixels any more (no fixed screen size), the programmers have to make sure the string doesn't stretch too far.

STE owners will be glad to hear about the enhancements on their version. The extra palette gives a smooth, colour grading effect down the screen, and extra memory allows sampled sound.

MURDER

'He's dead Jim.' Wish I'd have said that. But maybe I'll get my chance. In fact maybe I'll get 3.5 million chances! Because that's how many different murder cases you can choose from in US Gold's *Murder*.

Played in an isometric view, with period-style grey-scale graphics, you have two hours to solve a variety of murders, all of which are set in an Edwardian-style house.

Choosing the murder of your choice is done by selecting a date (1914-1942). One of eight different houses are selected from one of four skill levels (novice to super sleuth).

During the game you will see the wandering characters who occupy the house — and the dear departed lying on the floor. Clicking on your fellow inhabitants brings up a picture with their stats, name, portrait and inventory. Each character has their own bit of information about the murder — whether it be true or false. Objects around the place can be of similar help — although they don't talk much! When you find a clue — finger prints, verbal information — you can store it.

There's a maximum of 64 rooms in any one house, with 36 objects and up to 28 characters. At the end of your search you can accuse someone — but make sure you're certain who it is!

Murder will be available this summer for Amiga, ST and PC.

OPERATION HARRIER

Creative Materials introduced their revolutionary Rotoscape system in their first release, *Rotox*. The concept is that the player stays in the centre of the screen while the landscape revolves around him. Although this is initially *very* weird, Rotoscape gameplay soon becomes instinctive.



After *Rotox*, it's surprising to see a second Rotoscape development and a totally different game design. *Operation Harrier*, available on the Amiga, ST and PC, is an arcade game which places you in a AV-8B Harrier II V/STOL aircraft. You take off from your carrier in the Middle East after being assigned a number of missions, each with increasing difficulty. You may have to hit an oil refinery or sink an enemy destroyer; either gains you points and increases your rank.



As well as an overhead viewpoint, *Operation Harrier* allows you to move into the screen as your aircraft increases and loses altitude.

The graphics are a mixture of sprites and polygons giving a combination of detail and realistic 3-D. And, of course, a large range of weaponry ensures some frenzied action.

It is interesting to note that there is/was a Konix version in the works. With more polygons than any other version and graphics used in the 256-colour mode (256x200 pixels), the Konix version planned to utilise the yoke attachment. It will be a shame, with the present Konix troubles, if we don't see this impressive version on sale.

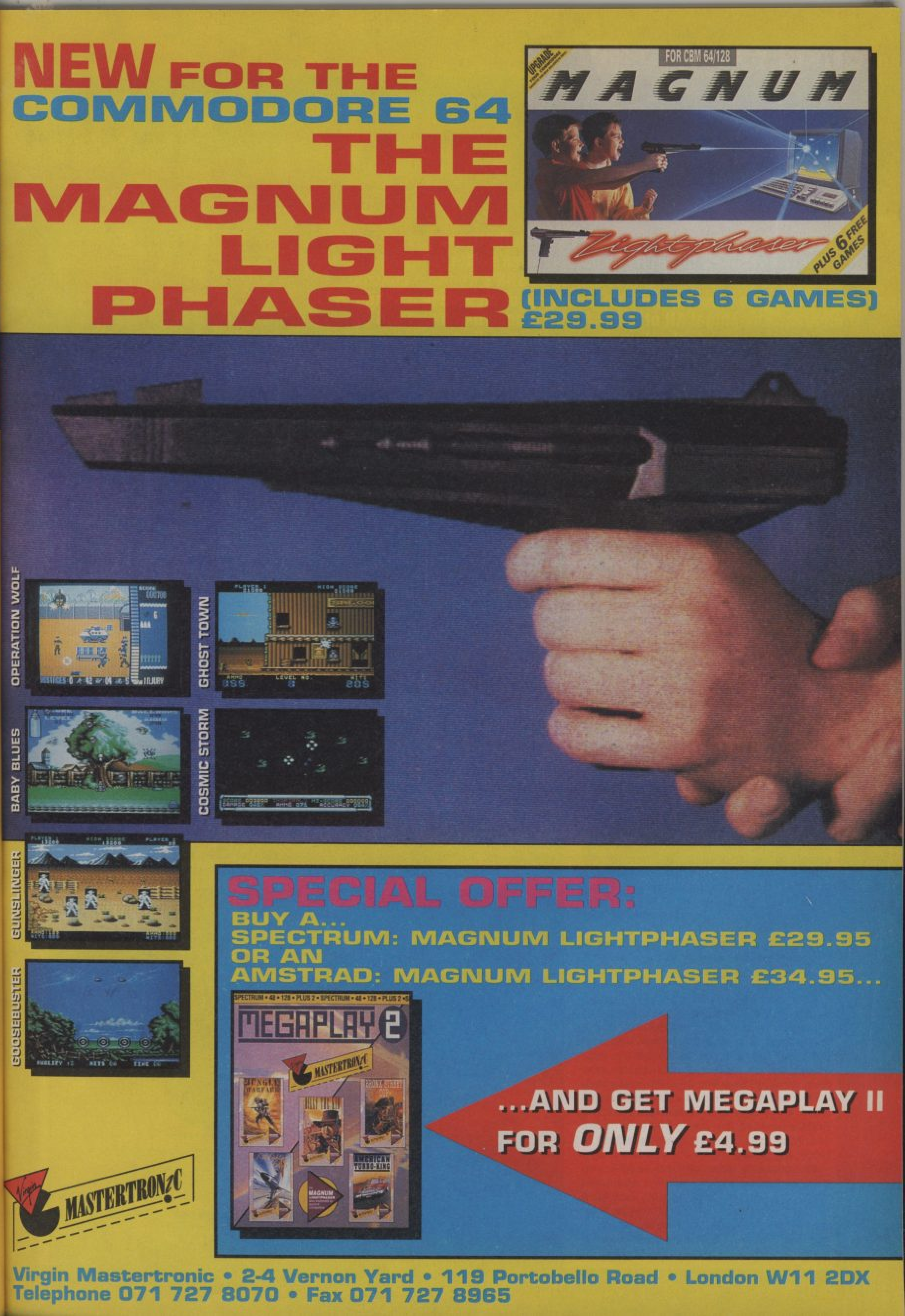
SNOW STRIKE

Snow Strike comes from Epyx in the States and, as a futuristic flight simulation/combat game, is something of a departure for them.

It's April 1999 and the President of America has given the green light on Operation Snow Strike, a planned attack on the drug barons of South America. The F14-LCB Cosmos, a state-of-the-art fighter, is purchased specifically for the mission.

This powerful and versatile fighter could destroy the major drug installations and transport modes — if it's flown by the right pilot. You are the right pilot...

The drug barons' domain has been mapped out by satellite pictures and the mission objectives are complete. The first solo run begins. There are ten different missions to accomplish, and missions specially prepared for your training. Have you got what it takes to make the grade of a futuristic fighter pilot? Find out when *Snow Strike* goes on release on August on Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Atari ST, Amiga and PC.


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A REAL MEA

Still lusting after an FM Towns for those definitive arcade conversions? Well forget it! Something even better is laying claim to the title of the ultimate games machine. SNK's Neo-Geo console isn't trying to emulate the high standards of an arcade machine it is an arcade machine! All of SNK's future arcade machines will be housing the same technology used by the Neo-Geo — games will look, sound and play the same.

For the technically minded, the Neo-Geo uses a 16-bit 68000 processor (like the Amiga) running at 12Mhz with a Z80A co-processor (like a Spectrum CPU) dedicated to sound (it can produce stunning synthesized sounds as well as use samples). On the memory front, it's got 64K of RAM and ROM, which isn't too impressive but the game cartridges actually do most of the work — each can hold up to 50 megabytes of game information! Consequently, the cartridges are larger than a normal console cartridge (larger than a VHS cassette in fact!).

The Neo-Geo also features a credit-card sized slot on the front of the console into which you plug memory cards. These cards are used in conjunction with a save facility to store your position on any game. You will also be able to take your memory card down to the arcades and use it on SNK's new line of arcade machines. The only other ports are two 15-pin joystick sockets at the front.

The one big catch is the price. A console complete with joystick and memory card costs £399.99 (not too bad), while the games cost a staggering £119.99 each (aarrrgh)! Back in Japan there's a thriving Neo-Geo games rental market which may eventually find its way over here. (It operates in a similar way to the video rental market with which we are familiar with over here.) In the meantime take a look at TGM's reviews of the first three Neo-Geo releases, and see if it's worth spending that much cash on a game. (At 20p a go, you'd have to play the game 600 times to get your value for money out of it — Ed.)

NAM 1975

Scenarios are a waste of time for games like this — it's pure blasting action all the way. As Johnny Grunt, you've got to face waves of enemies before the final showdown with a megalomanic professor. There are no innocent by-standers to worry about — if it moves shoot it, if it doesn't move shoot it anyway.

The display is a cross between *Cabal* and *Operation Wolf*. At the bottom of the screen is your character who can move left or right while his gunsight appears elsewhere on screen. Just like *Operation Wolf* the screen continually scrolls either left or right, with the occasional static screen at the end of a level.

The joystick controls the movement of your gunsight as well as that of your character. Moving left will move the gunsight rapidly to the left while your character will walk very slowly in the same direction. So, in effect, you can practically stand still while your gunsight zips all over the screen, great for clearing the area of enemies if you're in a secure position. However, there are numerous times when you want to move quickly to the other side of the screen to escape an incoming attack...

***Nam 1975* makes use of three of the joystick's four fire buttons. Button A acts as a standard fire button, button B lobs a grenade while button C works in conjunction with the joystick to speed up your movement or make your character perform a roll. In use this system works very well. The only problem I experienced was when stuck in a tricky situation, fumbling fingers pressed the wrong key making the character roll when I really wanted to throw a grenade.**

Occasionally, after killing a baddie, you are rewarded with some additional weaponry. These weapons only last for a limited amount of shots but they're a lot more effective than your usual machine gun. So far the TGM team have discovered a flame thrower, a super-fast machine gun, machine gun wielding women (they team up with your character when you free them from the baddies) and a rocket launcher (actually only Mark Caswell claims to have found one of these, however, he's a pathological liar and the rest of the TGM team don't believe that there's one in the game).



Sound and graphics wise *Nam 1975* is superior to any similar game on any other console, but the Neo-Geo is capable of better things. Just take a look at the pictures of *Magician Lord* for example. Nevertheless, it's gameplay that really counts and it's here that the game excels.

***Nam 1975* makes no pretences to a deep and meaningful game, it's all about fast reactions. The first level is fairly straightforward and inviting. Later levels present a real challenge, the kind where you find yourself glad that there's a continue play option. It's an addictive game which will now doubt be popular when it's released in the arcades.**

Perhaps the biggest faults with the game are the memory card options. If you use these a lot it won't take long to complete — although the game is far from easy. When you're paying more than £100 for a game you want something that's going to take more than a week or two of solid playing to complete.

Robin Candy **81%**

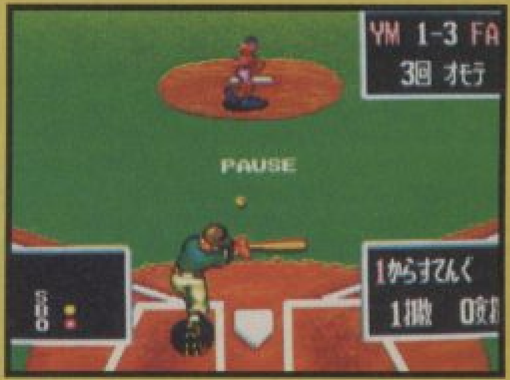


AN MACHINE



BASEBALL STARS: PROFESSIONAL





The first thing to hit you about this game is the sound, or rather the speech. It's not just the occasional snippet, the game seems to be permanently telling you that it's a 'fine day for baseball, not a cloud in the sky' or 'that's a well hit ball and it should be in there for a single' and other such things. The quality of the sound is every bit as good as anything else that's appeared in the arcades.

The actual game is a pretty standard baseball game. You can choose your own team from a list of players but since all their performance and physical details are written in Japanese it's impossible to tell if you've chosen a good team (unless you can read Japanese of course). There's the obligatory baseball league and a two-player game option and... er that's about it really.

The presentation of the game is faultless — loads of nice graphics and music — but that doesn't hide the fact that there isn't that much to actually do, especially when your team is batting. Then it's just a case of pressing the fire button at the right time. Pitching and fielding is a bit more involving but even then it doesn't require much skill to pitch or catch the ball.

As baseball games go it's not a bad effort, but it's not the sort of game that's going to make you go out and buy a Neo-Geo.

Robin Candy **75%**



MAGICIAN LORD

TGM STAR PLAYER

Visually, this is the most stunning of the initial batch of Neo-Geo games. Each level holds new graphical treats for the player. In fact one of the main charms of the game is the desire to see what the next level looks like.

As the title of the game suggests, you play the part of a magician cum warlord. Your task is to progress through several weird and wonderful worlds for a final showdown with an all-powerful magician. *Magician Lord* is best described as an arcade adventure/platform game. The puzzles are mainly confined to defeating baddies, or negotiating awkwardly positioned platforms, but there's more than enough going on to keep even the most seasoned arcade adventurer occupied.

You start the game as a laserbolt-shooting wizard but can quickly change your persona into something more formidable. Scattered throughout the playing area are magic potions which transform you into a totally different character.

In your new guise as the Ninja Warrior, Dragon Lord or Ice Warrior you are equipped with a new weapon and increased resistance to enemy hits. It doesn't take long before you've got your own favourite character, but the game is designed so that no single character is suited to all the problems you'll encounter. For instance, the fire-breathing Dragon Lord is great at killing the bomb-dropping birds but isn't too good against the guardian at the end of level one.

At the bottom of the screen are two bars. These indicate your current physical and weapons strength. Every time you are hit by an enemy shot or touch something you shouldn't, your physical strength is depleted. Needless to say, when it reaches zero your character dies. Your strength can be increased by collecting extra energy capsules or collecting a transformation potion (an added bonus of transforming is that your strength returns to full). However, if your strength falls below a certain level you will be changed back into the poorly-equipped wizard.



The weapons bar indicates how many shots your character will fire with each press of the fire button. You can only increase your firepower by collecting a weapons power-up and there's a maximum of three simultaneous shots per character. If you're unfortunate enough to lose a life, not only will you lose all your power-ups, but your character will be transported to an earlier stage of the game.

Out of the three Neo-Geo games reviewed, this is the hardest to play, and the one with the most long-term appeal. The transformation potions are a good idea since they add a whole new dimension to the game. As with any great game the only minus point is that it can get very frustrating when you've failed to get past a certain screen for the hundredth time.

Robin Candy **88%**

The Neo-Geo was supplied by PC Engine Supplies: 223B Waterloo Road, Cobridge, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST6 2HS. Tel: (0782) 712759.

EVERYTHING'S GONE GREEN!

Environmental issues are making themselves heard everywhere nowadays: TV, radio, magazines and... computer games. We've had *Rainbow Warrior*, the official Greenpeace game, while Rainbird's *Midwinter* was set in a barren land created by the effects of global warming. Now Micronet have their own eco-sensitive game called *Trash*. Robin Candy dons his rubber gloves and prepares to save the environment (but he's definitely *not* going to tidy up his desk)

Set in the future, sometime after Earth's pollution problems have been solved, Man has made his way out into space. In its furthest reaches he discovered the Multiverse — a collection of interlinked dimensions presided over by Da Boss, a mysterious character of almost unlimited powers. I say almost unlimited powers because he doesn't seem to be able to keep his own back yard in order. The Multiverse is being overrun by trash. You and your fellow players have been recruited as pan-dimensional dustmen to clean up the Multiverse.

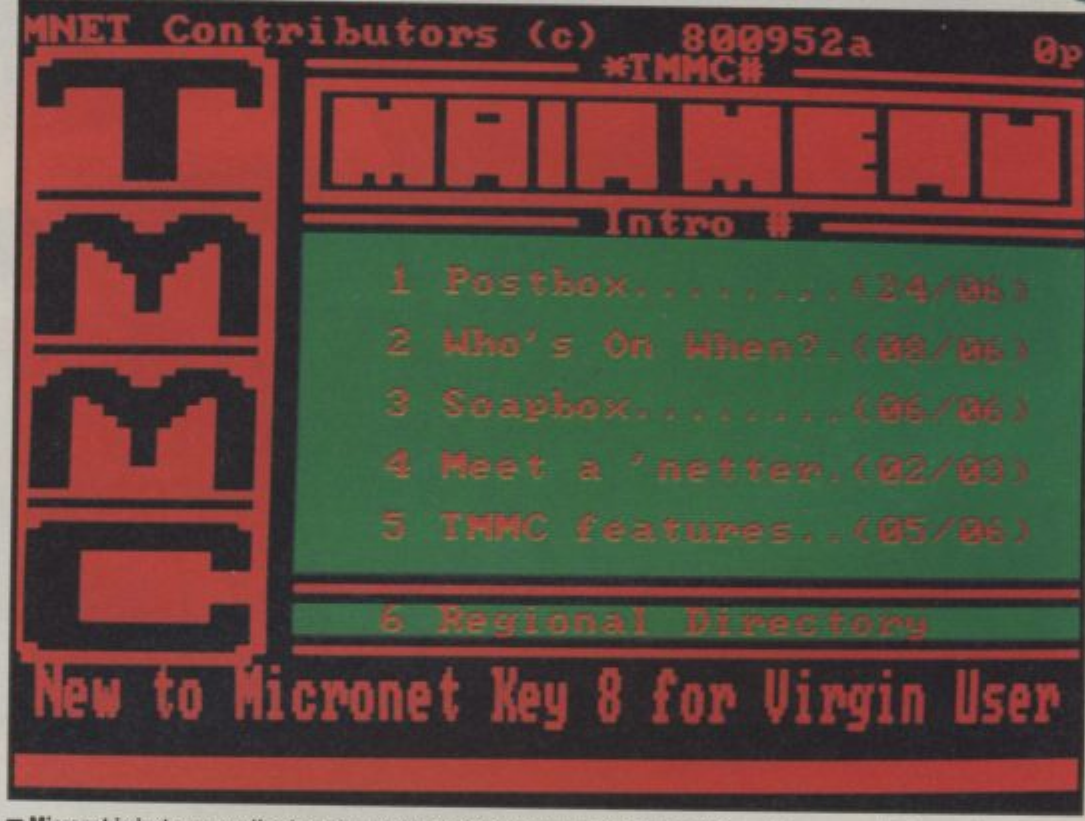
Trash is a multi-player realtime adventure. The Micronet information service (see box if you're unfamiliar with Micronet) allows several players to play the game simultaneously. The action onscreen is the direct result of your or other players' actions.

You start the game as a lowly slave with very limited magical powers. Commands are entered as simple English sentences, the kind used by numerous other adventures, such as 'Go north', 'Kick Warren', 'Build sandcastle', etc. There are several special commands which relate to your character's magical capabilities. These include: telepathy, clairvoyance, telekinesis, teleportation, pyrokinesis, telecontrol, faith healing and psionic shield. As you prove your worth as a dustmen you will be promoted to higher levels of binmanship complete with increased magic capabilities.

Initially, just exploring the Multiverse is enough to keep you amused. It's a very strange place, early on in the game I encountered a room of Clark Kents, another full of Tic-Tacs and a fruit machine which continually wandered around going 'beep, beep'. The puzzles are pretty devious too. Though the aim of the game is to collect trash and dump it in the atomic incinerator, you can never be sure whether that piece of junk you're about to burn may come in useful later on in the game.

Trash is best played when several other players are in the Multiverse. It's a lot more fun to play a game where you know that the other characters are real. Generally, fellow Trashees are a friendly lot who are more than willing to offer a new slave a helping hand. Though there are a few rogues who play on your lack of knowledge and get up to some mean tricks.

Trash is a good game. It's very atmospheric and very strange. The only problem we experienced when playing it was to do with the phone lines. In Ludlow there tends to be a lot of line noise which corrupts the data and manifests itself as onscreen glitches. But if you use the screen refresh command it doesn't hinder play too much. If your phone line is relatively noise free and you're generally interested in Micronet, the Multiverse is well worth a visit — but don't feed the leopards!

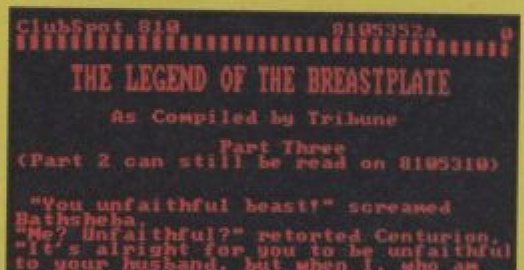


■ Micronet is just one small subsection of the massive Prestel network. The Micronet users, or 'netters as they like to be known, are a big happy family, holding regular meetings all over the country.

CAUGHT UP IN MICRONET

Micronet is a sub-section of the Prestel electronic information service (EIS). Information is transmitted down the phone lines into a device called a modem. The modem and the relevant computer software decode this information and display it on the screen of your computer. In turn, the user can send information back along the phone lines either to Micronet or to other users.

Micronet offers a whole host of services to their users. There are machine specific sections for most computers, which are basically electronic magazines featuring reviews, general and technical articles, as well as sections devoted to specific topics such as MIDI. Other Prestel services include: mailboxing facilities (MBXs — so you can send letters to other users), electronic shopping (you are billed for any goods you buy on your regular Prestel bill) and of course games. Currently the most popular game on Micronet is *MUD*, a multi-player *Dungeons and Dragons* type game.



It costs £92 for a yearly subscription to Prestel/Micronet, plus small extra costs depending on which services you use and, of course, the price of the phone call. Providing you stick to using Prestel during cheap rate hours (from 6pm to 8am) it doesn't cost that much to use.

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(Head Office courtesy Cannon)

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MEGA DRIVE/GENESIS

PC ENGINE

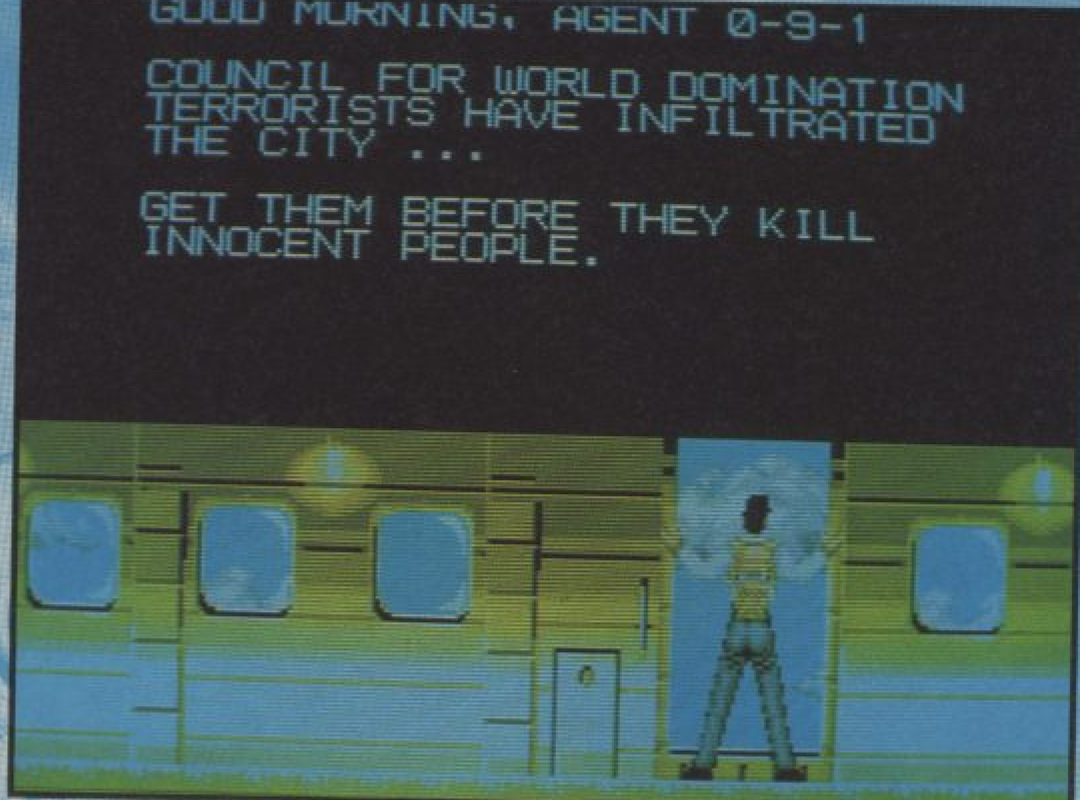
Clever, Mr Spy, but not quite clever enough

SLY SPY: SEC

It's a tough life being a spy. What with the constant jumping out of airplanes, high speed car chases and rescuing blonde bimbos things are not easy. But there's no doubt who the best man for the job is: Sly Spy.

The Council for World Domination (CWD) are threatening to detonate a nuclear bomb if the free world doesn't surrender. The American Government sends for Sly Spy.

The game starts in true James Bond style with Sly being booted out of a plane. Luckily he is wearing a parachute, but unluckily CWD agents are trying to shorten our lad's life. You start with a 9mm pistol and a full clip of ammunition. After disposing of the enemy agents, you land safely in Washington. But even on the ground you're not clear of trou-



TGM STAR PLAYER



CRET AGENT



ble. Walking past the Lincoln Memorial you soon get the feeling you're being watched — and then shot at! — so the sooner you get to your motorbike the better.

Headquarters inform you that one of the CWD bosses has been sighted so you must roar off after him. Jet packers and ruffians on motorbikes try to kill you, so it's just as well you stopped off at Special Stores to





pick up some 'special' weapons. Such weapons include a machine gun and a 'golden gun' (in five pieces).

There are eight levels in all (the sky diving and Lincoln Memorial sections are counted as one), most being horizontally scrolling *Renegade*-type stages.

The arcade coin-op, whilst being graphically good, wasn't exactly trend setting. Being an arcade conversion, Software Creations couldn't alter any of the computer game content, however, they have made the game more playable. It is blatantly obvious where Sly Spy's inspiration comes from, and it's probably the best secret agent game so far. Let's hope Domark's *The Spy Who Loved Me* can create the same kind of fun.

Mark Caswell

OCEAN

GAME **SLY SPY; SECRET AGENT**	
PRODUCER **OCEAN**	
VERSIONS	
AMIGA	£24.99
ATARI ST	£24.99
C64	£9.99/£14.99
SPECTRUM	£9.99/£14.99
CPC	£9.99/£14.99

ATARI ST 87%

Very close to the arcade original. In his black bow tie, white shirt and black trousers, Sly cuts a suave figure amid the enemy ruffians. Sound is also impressive with a selection of tunes and sound effects that complement the ensuing mayhem.

AMIGA 87%

Similar to the ST in almost all respects. Bond fans should purchase.

SPECTRUM 85%

Although not as pretty as the 16-bit games, it is every bit as playable. All of the eight levels have been crammed in (no mean feat), and both character and background sprites are colourful, well drawn and smoothly animated. Spectrum owners need not worry about the lack of good software — Ocean always come up with the goods.



But where's Burt Reynolds?

DELIVERANCE STORMLORD II

HEWSON

GAME **DELIVERANCE STORMLORD II**	
PRODUCER **HEWSON**	
VERSIONS	
C64	£10.99/£14.99
SPECTRUM	£10.99/£14.99
CPC	£10.99/£14.99



SPECTRUM 78%

Graphics are pleasant but not packed with detail, *Stormlord* himself the best, most mythical looking character. He's also the best animated, stomping defiantly along. There's plenty of colour, minimal clash and smooth scrolling. Theme music is suitably mysterious and the game's packed full of energetic effects.

The Realm of the Mighty Stormlord: a mystical medieval land that once knew peace and prosperity. Its modest people worked busily, looked after their neighbour and lived happily. But this was before the evil Black Queen turned her gaze toward the Realm. She captured the many magical fairies which helped protect and keep order in the land, and put hordes of her demonic minions in their place.

As leader of both the peace-keepers and the community as a whole, it was Stormlord's job to fight off the Queen's monsters and free the fairies. Though it was a tough and dangerous task, he entered into the fray with gusto and battled on till the Realm was restored to its former glory. With the Black Queen defeated, the people celebrated. Life was good again... for a while.

But now there's a new threat. The Black Queen may be gone but her followers live on, dedicated in her memory to her ways: pure evil and an obsessive desire to rule over Stormlord's Realm. To this end they've combined their powers and captured the fairies (they really get victimised, don't they?). They've spread them through strange and foul lands, unfamiliar to the fairies, who can't find their way back to their homes in the Realm. Naturally, Stormlord must save the day.

You begin in the sweltering, claustrophobic pits of hell and, collecting hovering fairies on the way, must progress to heaven. The fairies' minds have been influenced and corrupted by the foul new places and creatures surrounding them, so it's only this most pure of places that can restore them to their usual peace-loving selves.

Each level is composed of platform networks which you navigate with the aid of Stormlord's nifty ability of multiple jumps. He can effectively leap on air, jumping up to three times in a row before falling back to the ground. Flames, spikes, acid drops, poisonous gas bubbles and bouncing eggs are just some of the hazards you must avoid using this ability.

You can fire the small arrow-shaped missiles Stormlord carries at the vampires, zombies, goblins, nasty cupids and trolls but can also use limited supplies of more powerful weapons. These are collected simply by touching them, as are the fairies.

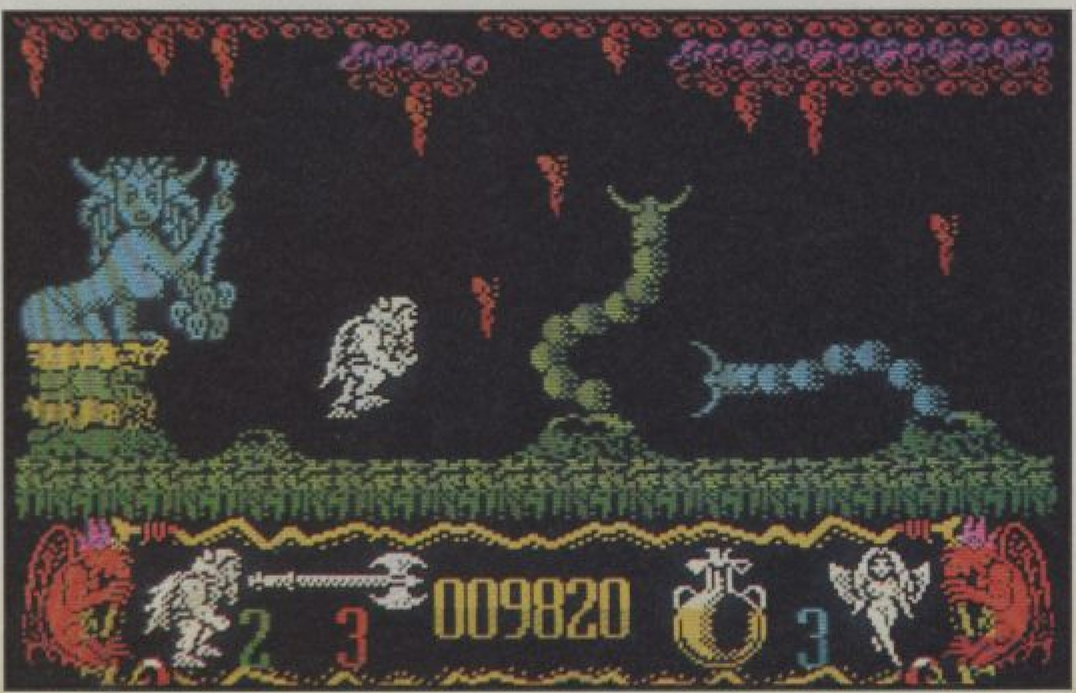
Between levels, extra lives can be gained in a bonus round. Fairies fly above you and if touched release a gold coin; a life is awarded for every ten coins collected. This isn't as easy as it sounds because his jump-on-air ability doesn't work, but instead Stormlord can drop hearts to stand on. The bonus level is cut short if you touch a patrolling dragon but in other parts of the game it can be tamed and the warrior can ride on its back.

Raffaele Cecco has created some great games in the past, originally programmed for the Spectrum but excellently converted to C64 and later to 16-bit machines. His last creation was the original *Stormlord*, a highly enjoyable platform arcade adventure I reviewed way back in TGM018.

Unfortunately, I can't quite see how Mr Cecco has been spending his time. *Deliverance* is by no means a bad game, the opposite if anything, but it doesn't live up to the excellence of its predecessor. It sacrifices the object and exploration puzzle elements for pure arcade. Deft, dextrous jumps, pixel perfect precision sometimes necessary, and expert timing, particularly when performing double and triple jumps, are the order of the day here. Shoot-'em-up elements are stepped up, too, with more monsters to blast and a wide variety of weapons to do it with.

Deliverance is an average Raf Cecco release, but as he's one of the better, more imaginative Spectrum programmers this means it's still a good, playable platform game.

Warren Lapworth



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GAME **UNREAL**	
PRODUCER **UBISOFT**	
VERSIONS	
AMIGA	£24.95

AMIGA **86%**

An attractive interlace title screen leads to a lava sea and rotating objects constructed from bubbles on the option/credits screen. The 3-D sections are fast and smooth but objects, although well formed, are grainy — the price to pay for convincing 3-D. 2-D sections scroll in smooth parallax and make excellent use of colour, some beautiful scenes made from carefully graduated skies and deftly drawn trees and marshes. Music's rather ordinary but sound effects are great; bird and animal noises setting an atmosphere.

Hey, wow, it's like—

UNREAL

UBISOFT

Thousands of millions of years ago, the god-like entity known only as The Sleeper finally stirred from a slumber many thought would never end. He sent his powerful servant, Fragor, to a new and lifeless planet, Unreal. Fragor took life-giving eggs, the four ancient elements (earth, air, fire and water) and two guardians (one good, one evil) to the world.

But Fragor collided with a comet as he entered Unreal's atmosphere, destroying himself and scattering all he carried. Without Fragor's wisdom to guide them,



the two guardians battled for control of the world and mastered the elements.

One of Fragor's eggs was lost and came to rest in a quiet valley where humans Isolde and Artaban were later born. They befriended a copper dragon who regularly visited them. When the dragon didn't arrive one day, Isolde went looking for him and was captured by the dark guardian. Overwhelmed by her beauty, he decided to marry her and she agreed, on condition he did not hurt her people.

Artaban and the dragon heard about the wedding and agreed to join forces to defeat the guardian, who lived in a faraway castle. With a magical sword, they would destroy the four elements that gave the guardian life and face unknown enemies on the way to his castle.

Artaban and the dragon's quest is split into five 3-D levels and three 2-D ones. The first is 3-D and you guide the dragon as he flies 'into' the screen. Obstacles (trees) have to be dodged and dinosaurs frazzled with fiery breath. You begin with 99 points of energy, reduced by hazards but increased by pyramid-shaped bonus crystals. Energy is carried from level to level so collecting crystals is highly advisable, particularly as it increases dragon firepower.

Setting down in the forest, the journey is continued on foot as Artaban for level two. The screen scrolls as he strides rightward, flipping every third screenful or so, but you can retrace your footsteps. This is often essential to activate triggers or collect items that will solve a puzzle. However, for the most part, 2-D sections are made up from hacking and dodging action. Crevasses to jump over, vines to swing from and moving logs to leap between are just a few of the hazards to be negotiated.

Creatures are slain with Artaban's trusty sword but the process can be speeded up by dipping the magical weapon in the flames of any fire. For a limited period, it becomes the firesword, which at its highest strength can shoot fireballs. From occasional sources, it can even become a watersword!

Back to the skies for 3-D levels three and four, along the river and over icy wastes, then raging winds and slippery surfaces complicate matters in the 2-D snowy wastes of level five. Back to dragon flight for the next two levels, across a lava sea to the outer defences of the guardian's castle. Then level eight, for the final confrontation between Artaban and the bad guardian's forces.

I was impressed by preview screenshots of *Unreal* but that was several months ago and I was beginning to lose hope. Now it's here — and it's been worth the wait, Ubi Soft's latest creation breaking new ground in the field of sword and sorcery games.

Rather than level after level of horizontally scrolling hacking, like most have done and are continuing to do, *Unreal*'s cleverly programmed 3-D dragon flight levels provide variety and interlude to the more brain-taxing sections. The flying levels are difficult and quite exciting but they're too long and there's too many of them; interest will wane.

The horizontal sections are much more than sword swinging, although it's the main objective. The precise timing and positioning needed to make jumps from vines and logs is the cause of great frustration when you fail time and time again but is what makes you play again, determined to succeed and triumph when the sub-section is complete. Puzzles are new to hack-'em-up games and while they're not particularly devious here, they take some time to work out.

Unreal's highly challenging so it's just as well there's a save game option, three saves per disk and accessible at any time. This feature is typical of the attention to detail and quality of *Unreal*, another great Ubi Soft game.

Warren Lapworth

TGM STAR PLAYER



Gremlin go green

VENUS THE F

Venus The Flytrap goes far into the future, where the problem of global warming has to take second place to an even greater danger, but one also caused by man's selfish use of harmful chemicals. In order to give higher and more profitable crop yields, vast quantities of artificial pesticides have been used to curb the insect population. The bug killing has gone so far that every species of insect has become extinct.

At first, the foolish celebrated. No wasps to bother you during the summer, no ant nests in the garden. The farmers were ecstatic: no bugs and no larvae to damage crops, no need to waste money on expensive chemicals to eradicate them.

But the more intelligent and far-sighted saw a grave problem. Small and irritating they may have been but they were vital to the lower part of the food chain. Creatures who ate insects to survive died out, then animals who ate *them* gave in to starvation — animals humans ate to stay alive. Vegetables and artificial foods couldn't be produced in sufficient quantity to plug the ever-increasing gap in the market.

To prevent the mass starvation of man, there was only one course of action: genetic engineers had to produce their own insects to restore the food chain. They worked diligently, 24 hours a day. They had to — life depended on it. Their hard work thankfully paid off and from the first man-made insect they subtly adjusted DNA to produce various different types. The food chain was repaired and gradually life returned to normal.

Well, almost. Something went wrong with some of the insect species. They were infected with a mutant virus which caused them to grow in size, strength and, most alarmingly, hostility. They devoured crops with remarkable speed and ferocity — but



didn't stop there. They began attacking animals and people, too, overwhelming them with their numbers, paralysing then digesting them with as much appetite as they did vegetation. At first it was just farmworkers and forest rangers they killed but then they began moving toward towns and cities in great swarms. Something had to be done.

Conventional weapons were not the



answer (much too dangerous to humans) and the lesson had already been learned about overuse of pesticides. So a weapon that could detect the mutated insects, blend in with them, was created. A truly artificial creature, the squat robotic grasshopper/fly called Venus was given the ability to take on board different types of weaponry to suit whatever situation it found itself in. Adaptability would be the key to survival and the eradication of all the vile mutant insects.

As you'll have guessed from the game's title, Venus has been placed in your capable hands. There are ten different areas of the world that are infested with the mutant insects and each of these is divided into five levels. Levels must be completed within a time limit and are made up from varying heights and lengths of platforms, punctuated by bottomless pits. Venus walks along in true creepy-crawly fashion and naturally, with his grasshopper looks, can jump long distances, the leaps directable while in mid-air.

Variations on earwigs, ladybirds, woodlice, caterpillars and other multi-limbed creatures, some of whom fire missiles, populate the levels, some crawling, others jumping on the spot and smaller insects flying by. Contact with either the insects or their projectiles deducts one segment of energy from the four-part life meter. When all segments are extinguished, the next hit results in the loss of one of three lives.

And it's not just insects that are dangerous. Plants nibbled by them have mutated, too, into spitting, semi-intelligent vegetation (à la *Ghosts 'N' Goblins*), and for some reason the humans have seen fit to leave automatic defence cannons active. The most dangerous enemy, though, is a mistimed jump — falling down a pit loses a life, no matter how much energy Venus has at the time.

Venus has an unlimited supply of missiles to spit out and most insects require a number of hits from these before they're exterminated. However, all but the smallest leave behind a metallic pod, which when shot becomes a collectable bonus, often a more powerful weapon. These can be Big Shot (simply a stronger version of the standard missile), three- or four-way firing, mortar (upwardly launched shell) or Beam-up. The problem with the stronger weapons is that they exist in limited quantity, so they must be regularly collected to replenish supplies,

TGM STAR PLAYER



FLYTRAP

GREMLIN GRAPHICS

GAME	**VENUS THE FLYTRAP**
PRODUCER	**GREMLIN GRAPHICS**
VERSIONS	
AMIGA	£19.99
ATARI ST	£19.99

but collected weapons can be easily switched between with the function keys.

The bonus revealed isn't always a weapon. It can be energy (a small heart which flutters skyward; the bigger the heart, the more energy is restored), an extra life, bonus points, extra time or shield, which gives invulnerability for a short time. The mystery bonus (a question mark) can give any of these or do the dirty on you and reverse the controls for about ten seconds



— highly confusing.

However, unusual controls are essential for progress as at certain times Venus must use its flying capabilities to hang upside down from platforms at the top of the screen. Left and right work as normal but down is jump; inverted sections don't differ in opponents or design.

Venus flips to the top of the screen when he touches special double-arrow gravity reversal tiles on the ground, and falls back again when touches more of them. Other tiles include magnets (to stop Venus jumping), super jump (higher and longer leap), continuous jump (throws Venus off the screen, losing a life in the process) and time loss. The latter tile type speeds up the rate at which the timer counts down — when it runs out, a life's lost.

Pods aplenty are held in secret rooms, but they really live up to their name. Doorways to the rooms are completely invisible and only open when Venus jumps into them. A number of platforms fill the single-screen rooms, each with at least one pod on, but Venus only has a short time before he's ejected back into the level.

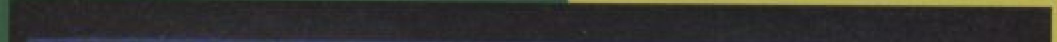
Following every fifth level, ie when a world area is completed, a bonus stage is encountered. Points and bonuses can be collected in these horizontally-scrolling shoot-'em-up sections but no matter how badly Venus fares against the attacking giant wasps, lives aren't lost in the stage.

The instrumental version of *Venus* (the song) by Don Pablo's Animals is high in the charts as I write this (number 13, to be precise) and its computer game namesake deserves to do even better in the software charts — top five, at least.

Venus The Flytrap is built upon simple jump and shoot ideas but, as is so often the case, uncomplicated gameplay ideas prove to be the most gripping. Just controlling the robo-insect's jumps is an enjoyable task; their height, length and directability meaning Venus is capable of more adaptable and tricky to master aerial antics than probably any other computer game character. Indeed, in early levels you're your own worst enemy, far more likely to lose lives by mistiming/directing jumps and falling into pits than by attacking insects.

There aren't many types of creeping, crawling opponents to face but they prove more than tough enough, especially the huge, extra-mutated insects encountered on later levels. Luckily there's a good spread of weapons to destroy them with, Big Shot being the workhouse of the six, and it's good being able to switch between them at any time.

Walking on the 'ceiling' (inspired by Jeff Minter's *Ancipital*?) is highly disorienting at first — you find yourself tilting your head to one side to make it easier — and makes jumping difficult. The gravity reversal tiles that put you there are the most friendly of the special floor surfaces, though: magnets



are irritatingly restricting, super jumps are worrying and time loss means you'll have to dash around to complete the level in time. Tile arrangements become very devious further in the game so you have to be extra careful where you tread/land.

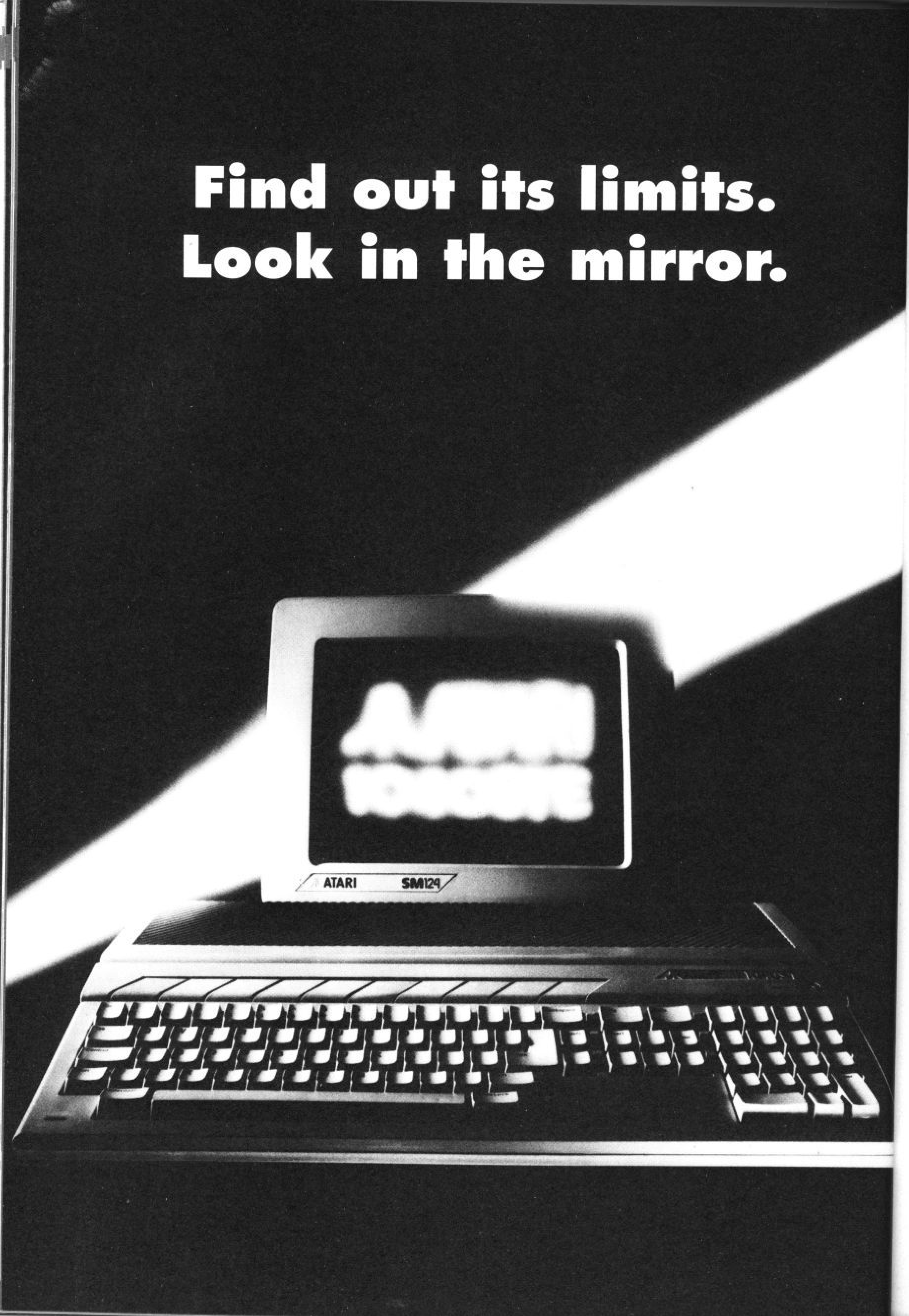
Together with the bonus rooms (*very* difficult to find) and the challenging but slightly underplayed shoot-'em-up sections, *Venus The Flytrap* is a very big and action-packed arcade game. Presentation and attention to detail are high but take a back seat to the amazing playability — truly addictive. *Venus* is one bug you really must catch.

Warren Lapworth

AMIGA 95%

The scene-setting introduction is pleasing, text accompanied by bright, animated pictures. Backgrounds are smoothly colour-graduated and platforms and sprites are detailed and excellently shaded. The huge insects of the bonus shoot-'em-up section and later levels are highly impressive but Venus himself (itself?) is the star of the show. He twitches, taps his feet, rubs his face and flutters his wings as he goes on his travels and his distinctive crawling motion is brilliant. Smooth three-layer parallax scrolling is used in the shoot-'em-up stages, golden shaded clouds wonderful to behold. The action's backed with numerous sample-packed tunes, many of them strange and spooky to match the unusual scenario.





Find out its limits.
Look in the mirror.
ATARI
SM124

Introducing the powerful new Atari 1040 STE. With such an awesome machine, we're convinced the only limits you'll come across are your own.

Based on the incredibly successful 1040 STFM, the 1040 STE itself goes beyond the limits of its predecessor.

The 'E', by the way, stands for 'Enhanced'. But once you've discovered its amazing array of features, you may consider 'Enhanced' to be the understatement of the decade.

Perhaps the most outstanding feature of the 1040 STE is its graphics. Its palette contains over 4000 colours (all right, 4096 to be exact).

To ensure precise and realistic images, the STE features 'hardware scrolling', enabling smooth scrolling in any direction and split-screen effects. And, with the SM124 monitor, you'll get razor sharp black-out-of-white text that's as clear as the type on this page.

To complete the picture, it is able to 'phase-lock' its video output to an external video source, permitting direct linking to a Genlocking device.



The 1040 won't just have your eyes swivelling in their sockets. Your eardrums will also take a pounding from the 8-bit PCM stereo sound.

The new PCM (Pulse Coded Modulation) sound system's two chips allow the 1040 STE to replay high-quality sampled sounds, in stereo, without burdening the CPU. Or, for even more of an earblasting, just add a couple of RCA output jacks and power the sounds through your own stereo.

Of course we mustn't forget memory. One megabyte of RAM comes as standard. If that's not enough, the 1040 STE provides four SIMM sockets. Simply plug in some SIMM (Single In-line Memory Module) boards and boost the RAM up to four megabytes.

To help you handle all this technology, we've added even more: a Blitter chip, capable of shifting data at high speeds independent of the CPU, and a new version of TOS.

The TOS 1.6 (operating system) has an enhanced file selector with drive-change buttons, improved desktop with file move, MS-DOS compatible disk formatting, and better application installation and auto-booting facilities.

As you'd expect, there's a huge range of peripherals including hard disks, floppy disks, laser printers, colour monitors and even Megafile 44, Atari's unique 44-megabyte removable hard disk.

As well as all this hardware, there are hundreds of software programmes for the 1040 STE - we're even throwing in the ST-Series Productivity and Leisure bundles free.

The Productivity bundle features a database, spreadsheet, word processor and business graphics package, and there's S.T.A.C., FirST BASIC, Hyperpaint and Prince in the Leisure bundle.

If you're itching to get your hands on the controls, there are two 15-pin analogue controller ports (which accept paddles, light-guns and light-pens) and a 9 pin mouse port and joystick port.

With adaptors, up to six people can use the 1040 at one time. Just in case it's too much for one person to handle.

At £499.99 it certainly won't be too much for one person to afford.

The ideal computer at the ideal price, you may think. We think so, too. But there remains only one potential problem: not whether you'll make impossible demands of the 1040, but whether the 1040 will make impossible demands of you.

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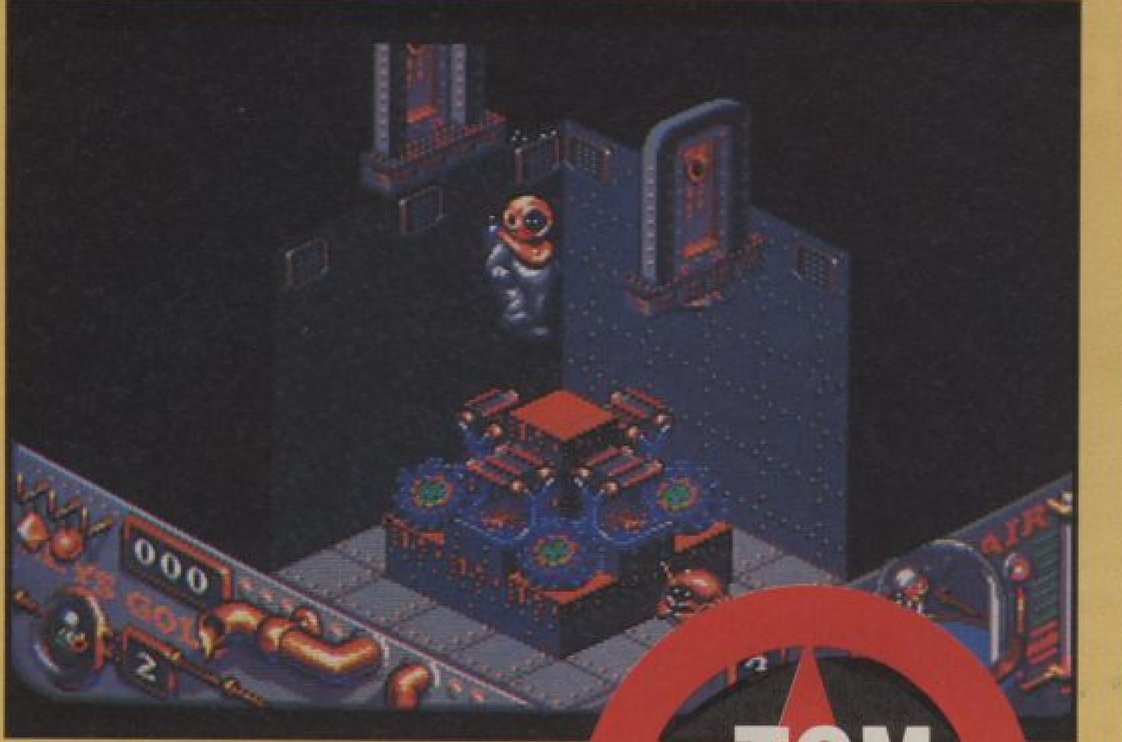
ATARI 1040STE

WITHOUT IT YOU'RE JUST PLAYING GAMES

Where no man has gone before

TREASURE TRAP

ELECTRONIC ZOO



GAME **TREASURE TRAP**	
PRODUCER **ELECTRONIC ZOO**	
VERSIONS	
AMIGA	£19.99
ATARI ST	£19.99
PC	£24.99

AMIGA **85%**

The up tempo version Row, Row, Row Your Boat takes you smoothly into the game. The main character is without a doubt the star of the game. The way he waddles along his porky little body, looking not too dissimilar to our own Phil King on ZZAP! magazine, is most entertaining in itself. The graphics are well defined, with neat bubbles floating from Howard Kelp's helmet. Sound effects are similarly comprehensive and make the game a real fun package.

TGM STAR PLAYER

On 9 January, 1856, a fortune in gold was lost when the vessel Esmerelda sank after her boiler room mysteriously exploded. All hands were saved, but Esmerelda now lies 300 feet down in one of the most dangerous parts of the ocean. For years it lay undisturbed, until 1927 when world famous explorer Howard Kelp decided to try and salvage the gold from its hold. Of course, at 300 feet normal diving gear is useless, a canvas deep sea diving suit and brass helmet are needed.

The game starts with a steamboat chugging across the ocean and winching your character into the unfriendly waters. Esmerelda contains over 100 rooms,



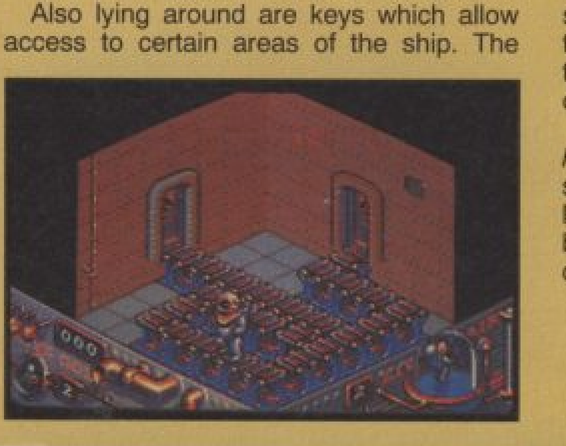


viewed isometrically (*Knight Lore* style), and every one must be visited.

Because of the nasty jagged edges on the ship, the usual deep sea air hose can't be used, bottled air must be carried instead. But this very quickly runs out, so the other bottles scattered around must be collected.

Against you are a range of aquatic creatures. These include crabs, eels, jellyfish and sharks. You aren't armed, but you're far from defenceless: two smart fish are provided at the start and when unleashed rip into the opposition with great zeal. In most of the rooms you'll find gold bars. Some are in seemingly inaccessible places, but by shifting the scenery around they can be reached. With every 80 bars collected an extra smart fish is awarded.

Also lying around are keys which allow access to certain areas of the ship. The keys come in several different shapes: spheres, squares and triangles amongst them. This access problem, combined with the massive play area, brings a great deal of strategy into *Treasure Trap*.



I haven't seen a decent *Head Over Heels* game for a long while, and this is sure to suffice for months to come. If you love a challenge, *Treasure Trap* will fit the bill. There's nothing fishy about this purchase (groan).

Mark Caswell



GAME **VENOM WING**	
PRODUCER **THALAMUS**	
VERSIONS	
AMIGA	£19.99

AMIGA **80%**

A nice intro sequence, backed with excellent music, shows hangar doors opening as the Venom Wing is lowered and shoots off into space, passing a planet and flying through an asteroid belt. Backgrounds and sprites make attractive use of colour and shading, particularly the cyborg head at the end of level two. Streams of aliens rotate and follow intricate patterns, spitting missiles as they go. Sprites fill the screen in more ways than one, either by weight of numbers or, in the case of levels one and three, by sheer size. Sound effects are plentiful and top quality; the best being the grunt of the eyeball-spitting cyborg head.

A game with real bite

VENOM WING

THALAMUS

As one of the pilots of the future, you're the best. You've survived countless battles with endless enemy ships and huge, grotesque monsters. But even you haven't dared the heavily armed fortress network. Many have tried, risking life and limb for the unimaginable wealth held inside, but none have returned.

The riches don't appeal to you — you reject material values and have more than enough money anyway — but the challenge of the fortresses is a temptation you finally can't resist. Boarding your space fighter, the Venom Wing, you fly towards the first fortress, wondering whether this time you're pushing your luck too far.

The first of *Venom Wing*'s four levels is unusual in that it's a static screen where you attack one huge, multipart stone fortress that gradually scrolls downwards, rather like immediately facing the end-of-level nasty from a progressive, horizontally scrolling shoot-'em-up. A giant knife, a gargoyle, snakes and more attack before the fortress launches its last defence, a dropship. Level three is similar, with a giant Atlas statue holding a missile-firing planet on his shoulders.

Even-numbered levels are more traditional, waves of aliens and ground-based gun emplacements firing at you as you fly rightward. Level two is a slimy tunnel, filled with intelligent plants, while level four is a high-tech fortress.

To help you, there are the usual power-up icons to collect, released whenever all segments of a slim, snake-like creature are shot. The first icon picked up gives triple fire and the second a small drone (similar to the one in *Armalyte*), which can be controlled by a second player. A third transforms the Venom Wing into an invulnerable giant eagle for a limited time, which has the disadvantage of not being able to fire.

Venom Wing is one more in the growing number of 16-bit *R-Type/Salamander* variants, but happily is one of the rarer, high-quality versions of those shoot-'em-up designs. *Venom Wing*'s originality is in its odd-numbered levels. Having to immediately tackle a big monster is odd, but they are *very* big, as is indicated by the fact they have to be scrolled through — they're amongst the largest 'sprites' in *any* video game.

The small number of add-on weapons is disappointing but the two-player team option makes the drone a lot more interesting, and the invincible eagle is very useful in places. Even with these facilities, *Venom Wing* is tough. It'll take several attempts to complete level one and then the vast level two will occupy you for a long, long time.

Venom Wing is one of the better Amiga horizontal blasters and is probably the most challenging. Care to try your luck?

Warren Lapworth

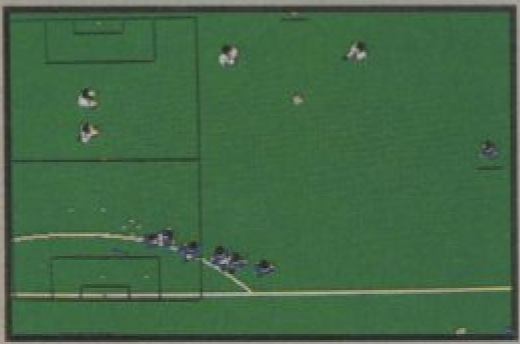




Anco win the World Cup battle

KICK OFF 2

The England versus Belgium match is raging as I write, but in the software industry there's a football result far more eagerly awaited: the arrival of the sequel to Anco's highly-acclaimed soccer game, *Kick Off*. After numerous delays and much anticipation (particularly from ZZAP!'s footie addict, Phil 'fatso' King), programmer Dino Dini's finally completed *Kick Off 2*.



The basic game is the same. The pitch is viewed from above but the screen only shows a fraction of it, thus it scrolls with the ball, following the action. To keep track of the match, a transparent HUD-like 'radar' (variable in size) marks the positions of the ball and all footballers.

Unlike most football games, the ball is free-running rather than stuck to dribbling sprites' feet; it has to be pushed along. Pressing fire with the ball at your feet 'traps' the ball, enabling it to be accurately passed; chipping and shooting determined by how long the fire button's held down. Scissor-kicks are a new feature and aftertouch allows the ball's direction to be influenced after it's left your feet (just like on *Extra Time*).

Unless the ball's overhead, in which case you jump for a header, pressing fire when the ball's not in your possession makes a sliding tackle. Fouls can result in yellow or red cards, of course, and now fouls just outside the opposition's box result in set-piece freekicks. When taking a freekick, the ball can be stepped over, passed to a nearby player or curved in an attempt to fool the defensive wall.

If you score a goal you're particularly proud of, you can replay it at normal speed or slow motion, and even save it to disk. Saved goals can be edited to compile your own Golden Goals disk.

Rather than just being able to choose your formation, game preparation in *Kick Off 2* allows you to select your team, including two substitutes, from an entire squad. Rather than playing as the whole team, switching between the players nearest the ball, you can leave the computer to control most of the team and just play in your favourite position.

Other pre-game options allow the alteration of pitch type (affects ball speed and bounce), match duration, wind strength, tactics (eight available, others can be loaded in from *Player Manager*) and skill level (which can enable *Player Manager* teams to be loaded in). Extra time and penalty shoot-outs can be switched on to prevent drawn matches.

However, the most variable option is Kit Design. The two colours of any team's kit can be changed and used upon different shirt designs: vertical, diagonal or horizontal stripes, for example.

You can practise with just a goalkeeper and real matches can be single or international friendlies, or part of an eight-player league or knock-out cup competition. By choosing to play in particular positions, two people can play in the same team against the computer, or, with a joystick expansion interface, against two other humans.

The Special Events option allows team/match/league data to be loaded in, and the six groups of World Cup '90 tournament are included in the full-priced ST/Amiga *Kick Off 2*. Any team can be player-controlled, but if you're not particularly interested, a version without the World Cup data will be available for £19.95.

I've seen as many football games in the past three months as I have seen in the rest of my life. I praise the Lord that *Kick Off 2*'s finally here to put them in their place but I must confess I'm quite disappointed with it — it's too much like the original, and even more like *Kick Off* expanded with the *Extra Time* data disk.

Penalty shoot outs and set-piece free-kicks enhance the realism and depth of matches and constantly replaying a good goal is the perfect way to irritate a friend — particularly if you save it afterwards! The Kit Design option isn't quite as flexible as I'd of liked but it allows you to easily create a strip you can personally identify with.

As in the original, dribbling's hard to master but playability is ridiculously high. If you haven't got its predecessor and *Extra Time*, it's an essential purchase and if you have it's still worth thinking about. Probably the best sports game ever.

Warren Lapworth

ANCO

GAME **KICK OFF 2**	
PRODUCER **ANCO**	
VERSIONS	
AMIGA	£19.95*
ATARI ST	£19.95*
PC	£24.95
C64	£9.95/£14.95
SPECTRUM	£9.95/£14.95
AMSTRAD	£9.95/£14.95

(*£24.95 with World Cup '90 data)

AMIGA 92%

Sprites are plain but functional and well animated. Scrolling's smooth and ball movement realistic, although the spots on it wander around stupidly. Pitches are nothing to look at but then they're only stretches of grass. Sound effects are the same select bunch of samples heard on *Kick Off*, but without the speech.

TGM STAR PLAYER



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TGM AUG



GAME COMBO RACER	
PRODUCER GREMLIN GRAPHICS	
VERSIONS	
AMIGA	£24.99
ATARI ST	£24.99

AMIGA 83%

A neat digitised combo picture backs the clearly laid out, easy to use options screens — the track designer being equally professional in look and use. In-game, roadsides are a bit bland but road perspective's fine, obstacles move smoothly from the horizon and stripy ground gives a reasonable sensation of movement. The combo sprite is nice, particularly with the sidecar man moving around as it speeds along, and grass, gravel or snow is thrown up when it veers off the track — a neat touch. Title music is pleasingly staccato and although the engine noise becomes as irritating as in any other racing game, crash sounds are good.

Two heads are better than one

COMBO RACER

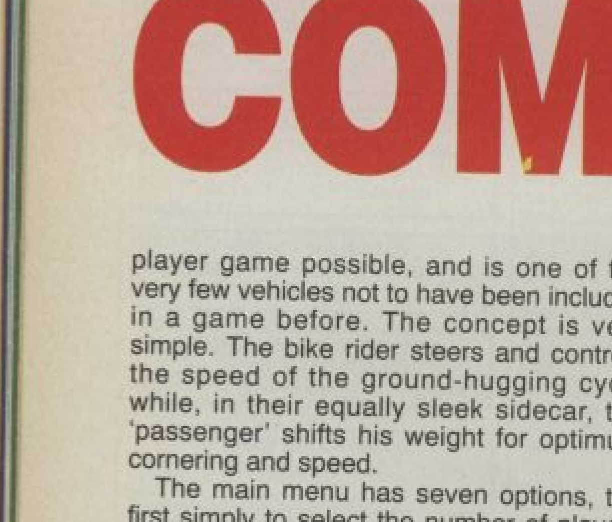
GREMLIN GRAPHICS

You've competed against friends to get the best lap times in race games, and even gone head-to-head with them in split-screen affairs like the classic *Pitstop II*. But have you raced as a *team*? No, I thought not.

It's the motorcycle and sidecar combination (combo) occasionally seen on sports programmes that makes such a two-player game possible, and is one of the very few vehicles not to have been included in a game before. The concept is very simple. The bike rider steers and controls the speed of the ground-hugging cycle while, in their equally sleek sidecar, the 'passenger' shifts his weight for optimum cornering and speed.

The main menu has seven options, the first simply to select the number of players — in a single player game the computer automatically moves the sidecar rider into the correct positions. *Practice* is just that, on any of the eight available courses, and prepares you for real competition after *Begin season*. This opens up a sub-menu where season data can be saved and loaded, tracks saved and player names entered and selected. *Next race* gets you down to the track while *View points* show points and rankings so far. *Lap select* lets you choose between five and 25 laps per race, in multiple of five, and *Track editor* lets you create your own circuits.

Control of the combo is simplicity itself, usual convention applying for the six-gear cycle/sidecar. Speed, revs and gear are shown below the track while lap times, positions and a map, which marks the positions of all competitors on the circuit, are superimposed on the sky. Crashes increase the combo's damage percentage, which decreases its maximum speed. Controlling the sidecar man is easy, left and right moving him to the corresponding side of the vehicle. For taking corners, he should be moved towards the apex of the bend.



Previously created tracks can be uploaded into the *Track editor* to play in a season or adjust first. Alternatively, tracks can be deleted altogether, allowing a circuit to be made from scratch. This is done using nine icons (five others deal with saving, loading etc), for curves, straights, tunnels and slopes. Slopes are entered with use of an isometric view at the lower right of the screen, which replaces the map view of the track normally seen there. Finally the background is chosen from City, Desert, Winter, Japan, Rio, Miami, Black Forest and Hillside.

Well, any software house wanting an original vehicle for their racing game are going to be a bit stumped. I thought the stripped-down 4x4 cars of *Power Drift* were pretty strange but the motorcycle and sidecar combination, despite being a known machine, is more unusual still.

In a one-player game, playability is higher than most racers but not exceptional. It's helped by user-friendly touches like being able to quit the qualifying laps when you think you've got a good enough time, and the save/load season option. But it's with the second player that



Combo Racer comes into its own. Player one has most of the job to do — steering, accelerating, changing gear and braking — but his times and place in the race (if not his life) are in the hands of the sidecar man. If he's incorrectly positioned, speed and particularly cornering are seriously affected, sometimes to the point of the combo being thrown off the track, bodies flying through the air.

Track designers have been done before but the one in *Combo Racer* is by far the easiest to use. Just a few dozen clicks of the mouse and a track is made, complete with twists, tunnels and slopes. It's best not to go too mad until you're fully used to the game otherwise you'll find yourself crashing off corners of your own making!

Although aesthetically it isn't the best, the two-player team option and excellent track editor put *Combo Racer* in a class of its own.

Warren Lapworth

YOLANDA

by Steve Bak

THE ULTIMATE CHALLENGE





ATARI ST SCREEN SHOTS

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- Game design by the legendary **Steve Bak.**
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MILLENNIUM

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Will Quiffy be caught by the Plonkin Donkins?

FLOOD

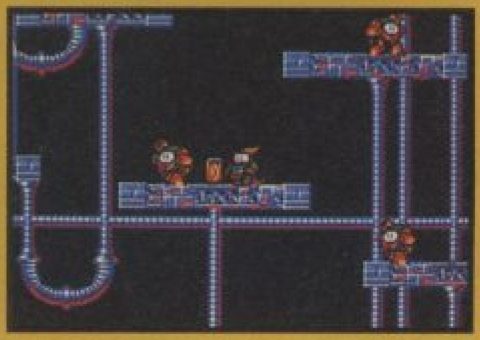
ELECTRONIC ARTS

GAME	**FLOOD**
PRODUCER	**ELECTRONIC ARTS**
VERSIONS	
AMIGA	£24.99
ATARI ST	£24.99



AMIGA 76%

The silly title tune complements this strange — not in concept, in design — game. Although the main characters of *Flood* are distinct and colourful, it's a great disappointment that a more realistic water effect couldn't have been implemented (as promised). However, the jingles and quirks in the game make it quite an attractive package for platform players.



There's water here, and lots of it! Not just a few droplets, but bucket loads of the stuff. With so much water it's not surprising there's a Bullfrog involved in there somewhere. What the programming team Bullfrog have created here is an underground (and sometimes underwater) adventure of large — not quite epic — proportions.



Poor Quiffy, a little round green chap, is still in shock. The rest of his people have been killed by a species of evil maniacs leaving Quiffy the sole survivor of his important race. Important because Quiffy eats nothing but refuse, making him an essential part of the planet. If his species were to disappear the planet would become a total wasteland.

There's only one way out of this hell hole. Quiffy must reach the top of the cavern he is in, and find the existence of other Quiffys elsewhere. And time is short, the planet is falling apart around his ears, and the cavern is filling up with water.

As Quiffy tries to escape, he must eat all the trash in his path. A counter informs Quiffy how much rubbish is left to munch, and he can't leave the planet till it's all gone.

Trying to prevent Quiffy are assorted evil monsters; people like the Bulbous Headed Vong, Lumpy Wanderer and Plonkin Donkin (!). However, one of the worst offenders is his own aunty! She starts to chase him is he takes too long clearing a cavern. Just her touch will zap your energy supplies, and the only thing you can do is outrun her.

Also creating a time limit is the water. As soon as you set foot on the screen, it starts to fill up with the blue stuff. Of course, this can prove pretty useful when trying to reach some of the trash, as you can swim across it. But most of the time it will just annoy and take oxygen from your much needed reserves.

As with most underground caverns nowadays, there are loads of weapons scattered around the place. Picking up things like grenades, mines, shurikens and large flame throwers can do nothing but help your escape.

Once you've collected all the trash from the cavern, you can jump in a transporter and travel to another part of the underground world.

After the innovative *Populous*, *Flood* is definitely a step sideways for Bullfrog. All they've produced here is a platform collect-'em-up. Nothing original whatsoever. However, the game is playable and full of extra features designed to make it a bit different. And although there's plenty to map, I have my doubts over lastability.

Mark Caswell



FOFT comes of age

BSS JANE SE

You're not amused. It was bad enough that, as a leading Commander of the Federation, you were sent on a mission that took you far from Earth, a 17-year round trip. But then it all went terribly wrong. A collision in an asteroid belt forced you to abandon your damaged ship and continue your journey in a small escape craft.

And now you've been awakened from stasis to find yourself not in orbit around Earth but drifting near a stranded Federation biological survey ship, the BSS Jane Seymour. Your escape craft has been diverted so that you can rescue the ship, its crew and cargo.

The diversion means your craft has insufficient fuel to reach home so, like it or not, the only way to get there is by repairing the



Seymour. All the Seymour's 14 systems, divided under the headings of Bio Control, Life Support, Computer and Communications, can be restored by a strange orange fluid coolant called hydrofloxine so it's the collection and distribution of this that's the main task. Other repairs generally involve replacing broken or missing components of systems.

DROIDS

BATTLE *This robot has built-in weapons/combat capabilities, so is very useful to send ahead and clear areas of hostiles.*
SENSOR *A life scanner enables it to frequently report upon the approach of life forms.*
MANITOR *A humble little droid, it cleans up any spilt coolant.*
FIXIT *Can repair objects and help fix ship systems.*
RAT Extremely *ordinary, the rat droid has no built-in functions.*
COMPUTER *Allows you to access information in the ship's computer without actually being within reach of a terminal..5*

BSS Jane Seymour, the game, has 20 levels which become more complicated, more dangerous and involve more rooms and corridors as you work through them. The main screen is dominated by your view of the Seymour, shown in isometric 3-D: rooms, corridors, objects and creatures (yes, you are not alone!). Next to it are the means of exploration. Via mouse and pointer, four blue arrows move you one square in the appropriate direction (if the way isn't blocked) and two green ones rotate you 90° (clockwise or anti-clockwise). Also at the top of the screen are what you're holding in your hands, time elapsed since the game began, your current location and a text information box.

At the bottom left are your health indicators. A face indicates your general state of health and stamina — as they deteriorate the face becomes a skull. A cardiograph and heart visual show your heart rate, of course, but the colour of the heart indicates the amount of radiation you've absorbed, gradually becoming a lethal bright yellow. The radiation level of the current location has its own graph and a function panel has icons for whatever other screens are accessible.

The screen that's available wherever you are is the inventory. Objects in the current location, held in your hands, clipped to your belt, worn, in your backpack and in the possession of any drone robots you've met are shown. Objects are easily moved from place to place with a few clicks of the mouse.

The objects of most immediate use are passcards. Grey doors can be opened without a card but other doors require one of the same colour as themselves or a colour of a higher priority; in ascending order, red, orange, yellow, green, blue and the most useful passcard, white.

Passcards in your possession, the first location you're likely to need to visit is a manufacturing room. Unless you're lucky enough to find some lying around, you have to visit one of these to make the milk bottle-like receptacles that can hold the precious hydrofloxine coolant. You can make up to six receptacles, of between one and five

TGM STAR PLAYER



EYMOUR

GREMLIN GRAPHICS

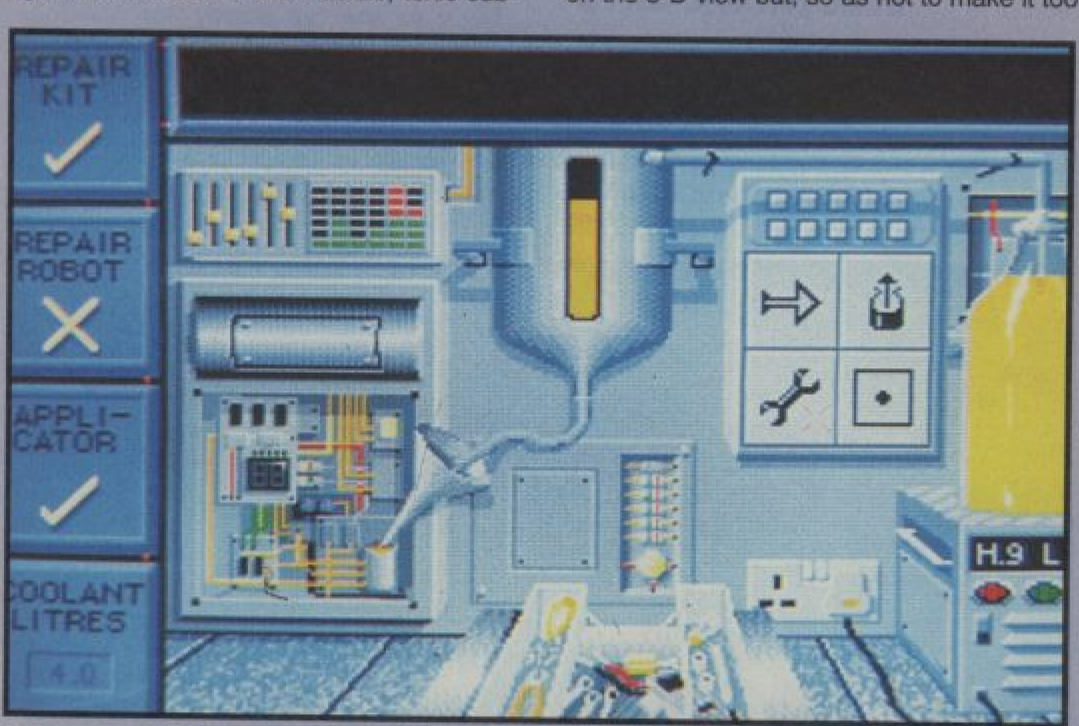
GAME **BSS JANE SEYMOUR**	
PRODUCER **GREMLIN GRAPHICS**	
VERSIONS	
AMIGA	£24.99
ATARI ST	£24.99

AMIGA 89%

Visually, *BSS* isn't anything special. Status panels, icons etc are clearly drawn and laid out, but, like room and corridor graphics, are merely functional. The receptacle making and filling machines are the best graphics, they look highly authentic. Alien sprites — including such oddities as a spitting, floating jellyfish and unfolding rock creatures — are attractively shaded and are pleasant rather than nasty beasts. Animation's average but sampled sound effects are brilliant, groans, shouts, printer, gadget and weapon noises all of excellent quality and originality.

litres in capacity, but making them uses ship power. The larger the receptacle, the more expensive it is to produce (logical) but, as they hold more coolant, chances of repairing a system are higher. Swings and roundabouts, eh?

Next logical port of call is the lab, where coolant is dispensed. But it's not just a case of pouring it into the receptacles. Hydrofloxine coolant is an acidic, toxic substance that will weaken any flaw in a vessel holding it, therefore the receptacles are checked before they're filled. If they're flawed, they're rejected.



To make the repair, you have to go to the room appropriate to the division of the system you wish to fix and have a repair kit and a minimum of a litre of fluid. A coolant applicator and robot with repair capability are useful for the restoration of a system but not essential.

Found in the same random manner as any object but a whole lot more useful, there are six types of robot scattered around the Seymour (see box). Each has four main commands, each of which is self explanatory: stay here, follow me, power down and program. Naturally, the latter enables a number of other, more complicated commands to be linked. These include GOTO, where the number following it specifies the room number you want the robot to go, pick up and drop (both of which require the serial number of the object you want picked up/dropped). Lines of the program can be deleted and inserted and the whole series of instructions can be erased or run. Robots can be given new functions, some the same as other types of mechanoid, some unique, by plugging cartridges to them.

There's more danger than that from the ship's radiation level, of course. As a biological survey ship, the BSS Jane Seymour has many alien life forms on board and as bad luck would have it, the damage inflicted upon the Seymour resulted in the accidental opening of the cages holding the exotic beasts. What's more, the Seymour's crew have been driven mad by the radiation they've absorbed, thus they're as hostile as the aliens are.

Aliens/crew are attacked with a crosshair on the 3-D view but, so as not to make it too easy, it wobbles in an awkward manner, making aiming difficult. The size of the cursor and therefore the ease of aiming of a weapon depends upon its strength — the more powerful the weapon, the bigger the cursor. The disadvantage of powerful weapons is that they generally take some time to reload, leaving you wide open to attack, and apart from simple implements, any weapon can run out of ammo or malfunction.

If repairing the broken/damaged systems and surviving the onslaught of both creature and radiation alike aren't enough, you must always find the Inhibit Lock. Without this, even if the BSS Jane Seymour's fully operational and you're in tip-top health, you can't get into the navigation room and thus can't get back home to Earth.

To get the (brief) criticism over with, *BSS Jane Seymour*'s game design is highly derivative of *Dungeon Master* while the graphic style and scenario is reminiscent of Pandora's sci-fi variation on that game, *Xenomorph*. Given the quality of the former product, this is by no means a problem, and as it's also known as *Federation Quest One*, ie it's a descendant of *FOFT*, it has a history of its own.

BSS is a deal more complicated than other games of its type, the simple aim of exploring and staying alive compounded by having to find the necessary replacement components and, of course, produce receptacles and fill them with coolant. Discovering your precious 'milk bottles' are flawed can be highly frustrating after battling through numerous vicious aliens!



■ Jane Seymour (above in Head Office) was the inspiration for the game's starring survey ship.

Combat is the only pure arcade part of the game but provides enough headaches. With the uncomplicated idea of making the weapons cursor wobble drunkenly, combat is something that requires real skill and especially timing. With a weak weapon — small cursor — it's *very* difficult to hit small aliens, especially the spindly pterodactyl-like bird.

Programmable robots/drones are becoming increasingly popular in games, the language used in *Gravity* the best so far but the different types of droids and cartridges mean that, in its way, *BSS* is equally versatile. With the many different information panels and screens, its attention to detail that spreads throughout the game. *BSS* is a large but not vast game that will appeal greatly to cartographers and arcade adventurers alike.

Warren Lapworth

Making a stand for green issues

PGA TOUR GOLF

ELECTRONIC ARTS

GAME **PGA TOUR GOLF**	
PRODUCER **ELECTRONIC ARTS**	
VERSIONS	
AMIGA	£24.99
PC	£24.99

PC **84%**

After the pleasantly drawn Pro Shop and PGA Tent, the first thing you see in a tournament is the impressive 3-D fly-by, showing the contours of the hole. It doesn't work well on a slow machine but the way the fly-by window increases in size as it tracks back to the tee, ready for the full-screen scenery and golfer sprite of the game itself, is impressive. Your golfer is a touch blocky but animated well and ball movement's fairly realistic. Music and effects are basic but Roland, Adlib and CMS boards are supported.

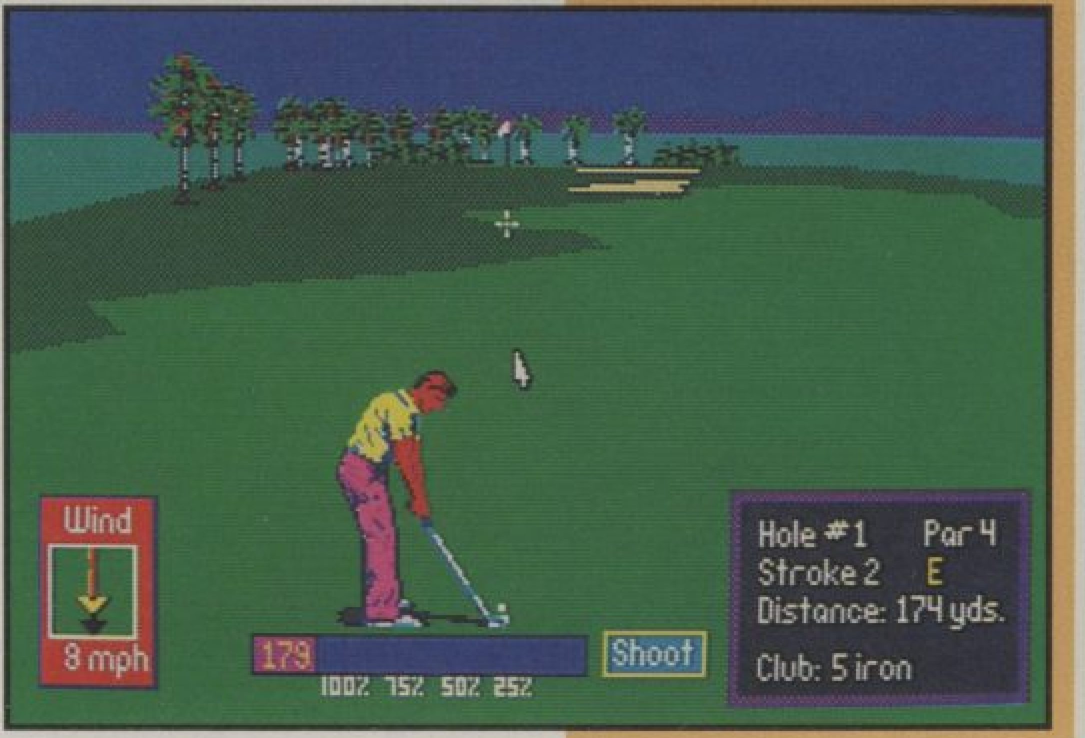
As the synthetic TV presenter Max Headroom (where is he now?) might ask, do you play golf? If the idea of wearing tacky checked trousers and walking around in wet weather has always put you off playing the real thing, let *PGA Tour Golf* take you on a few rounds from the tasteful comfort of home.

The game is run from the Pro Shop which has five pop-up menus, Play, File, View, Stats and Options. The first Play option is Practice Round which lets you tackle any of the game's four courses. The number of players competing, whether they're human or computer controlled, new or continuing with data previously saved to disk, whether they're starting from Professional or Amateur tees, and which 14 clubs (out of 17) they'll be using, have to be defined. This is also the case for an actual Tournament. Practice options on the Play menu let you try out on the driving range or a putting green.

The File menu saves and loads games and erases player data from disk, and View gives your scorecard, the leaderboard and tournament results. Stats gives information on driving accuracy, average score, longest drives, earnings and so on of current and saved players and lists leading scorers and money winners of the tour.

Selections on the Options menu toggle whether special features are automatically used in the game. Overhead gives an aerial view of the course and the path taken by the ball after each shot. In text and with a small graphic, Ball Lie shows the surface the ball's on after every shot and Greens overlays a contour grid when you reach one. Fly-by-hole Preview shows a 3-D tracking shot of the hole, around the flag then back to the tee, and is accompanied by text advice from a PGA member. Music and effects on/off are the last parts of the saveable Options configuration.

At the tee, shots are aimed with a crosshair, bearing in mind wind speed and direction indicated by a small arrow to the left of the screen. On the right, an information box gives hole number, par, stroke number, distance from hole and club in use. A shot is played by pressing fire three times. The first press puts a power bar in motion, growing from the 'accuracy point', the second sets the power and reverses



the bar's direction, and the third press stops it. If the bar is stopped before it reaches the accuracy point the ball will hook to the left, if it's stopped beyond that point the ball slices to the right. Shot accuracy is also affected if power is set above 100%.

If you play a bad shot while practising, you can 'take a Mulligan' (replay a shot without penalty) but in a tournament the best you can settle for is dropping a shot. If you're doing badly you can give up and go on to the next hole but it'll count as 12 shots on your round. A good shot's automatically action replayed in slow motion, the ball's motion through the air plotted, but you can choose to see any shot again.

After a nice clean opening shot, further one's are complicated by the lie of the ball, in rough, sand and so on. Choice of club helps but there're also punch and chip shots to help you get out of tricky situations.

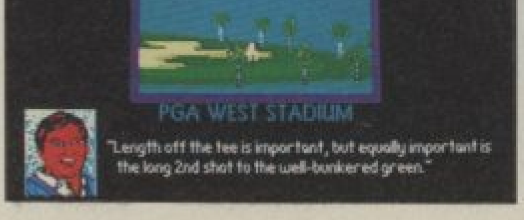
The basis of the game — the viewpoint and control system — is the same as the majority of golf games; other than a single bar rather than a split one, the power/slice/hook meter is the same as the classic *Leaderboard*. However, *PGA Tour Golf* is unique in its wide variety of options.

The fly-by, backed up with the usual map, is a great way to familiarise yourself with the trees, bunkers, water and fairways of the hole, and tips from the American pros are a boon. The contour grid of the green is a concise and accurate way of showing the slope, but as it makes putting easier, uneveness is extreme on some greens.

The action replay is purely cosmetic but is fun to use, while chips, punches, drop-shots and so on increase realism of play. Wind is also true to life: rather than the constant strength and direction of other games, wind is constantly changing in *PGA* and is prone to awkward bursts in unexpected directions.

For a polished, realistic and playable game of golf with all the trimmings, *PGA Tour Golf* is the one to go a round with.

Warren Lapworth



GAUNTLET
THE THIRD ENCOUNTER

GAME **GAUNTLET: THE THIRD ENCOUNTER**
PRODUCER **ATARI**
VERSIONS
LYNX £34.95

ATARI

Is there no end to your greed? Dozens of princesses rescued, hundred of treasure chests looted and still you want more. The Star Gem is the latest item to appeal to your kleptomania, and it has the unfortunate tendency of breeding hordes of violent creatures.

After a cool opening sequence, there's a character selection screen: choose from a female Barbarian, Sorcerer, Tub-like Android, Samurai and Punk Rocker! Each has their own statistics, stamina, speed, etc, and there's a useful option to start on a higher level, any multiple of five up to 20. Exactly halfway through the 40-level game.

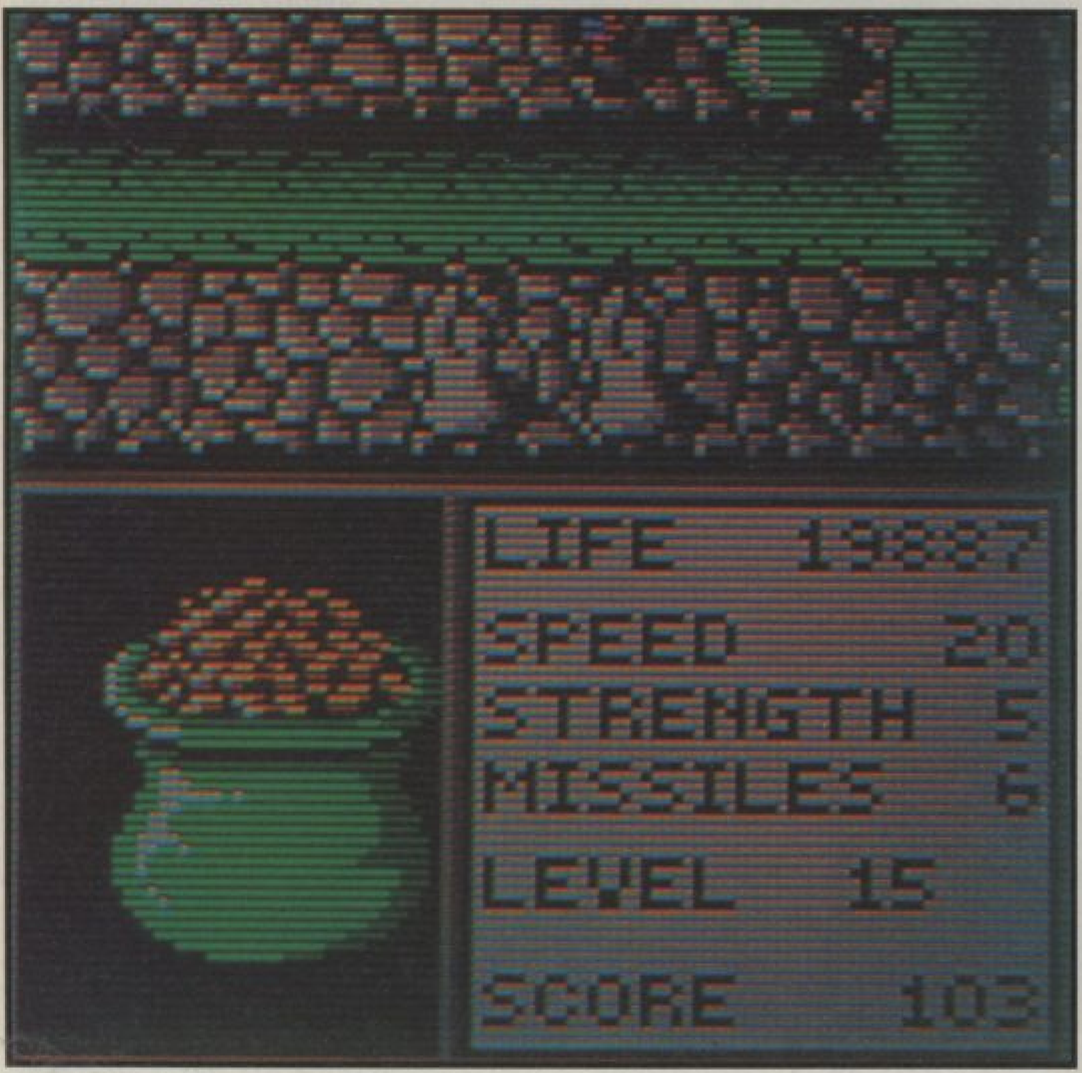
The game is played with the Lynx held vertically. Beneath the scrolling playfield there's a statistics/radar/inventory window. Radar is displayed most of the time. Moving towards something, like a big red apple, is mirrored here, gradually increasing in size (that hardware perspective scaling is hot stuff!). On the right are life points, speed, strength and missile intensity (no matter the weapon, its discharge is called a missile).

Now assuming there's nothing dangerous around, pressing B brings up the inventory. Scrolling through with the joypad let's you select an item and then use or discard it. A closeup of that item can be found directly to the left in what was the radar box.

For those who haven't played *Gauntlet* before, the rules are simple:

1) Race around the maze-like castle picking up useful objects.
2) Find keys to unlock gates.
3) Collect all the gold you can.
4) Exit the level when ready.

On the negative side is only this: everything is out to kill you! Even the plants, which eat you up and spit you out — a great animated effect. There's also ghosts, which must be shot from a distance, and speedy spiders — use the corners to trap them.



So look out for all those potions and items, some hidden behind apparently solid walls, and remember, just picking up an item doesn't activate it — you have to *use* it in the inventory window. You can't hold an infinite amount of stuff, and most of the magical effects vanish when you exit a level. One of the best items is a the Farsee scroll, allowing you to view the entire level without hindrance. Just remember, your body is a sitting duck while this is going on. There's also a Revive scroll — use it just before you die or, in multi-player games, to revive another player. Of course there *is* the fact that all your companion's possessions are left when he/she departs...

And gold isn't only pretty-looking, you can use it in computer terminals scattered throughout the levels. Some offer advice (like 'Go home'), while others will sell you the neat stuff lying about that you can't just pick up on your own.

Up to four players can go monster-bashing, but of course each Lynx has to have its own *Gauntlet* cart. Also, there are no code words or battery back-up. Buy the farm or turn off the Lynx, and the only way back to that mysterious level with the dancing fruit (?) is by starting all over:

Know seven friends who fancy a game?

LYNX 82%

***Gauntlet: The Third Encounter* is one great game for fantasy roleplaying fans. You get it all; fast animation, great colours, neat sound... Working the controls is easy, with the view similar to the coin-op versions found in arcades. Varying the background patterns of the mazes keeps away the boredom, and colour coupled with moderately sized sprites minimizes the 'eye-squinting headache' factor that often plagues the Game Boy. You do have to get used to switching between the A/B buttons, so until you get your bearings, it's best to have some gold in the inventory window. That way you can only accidentally drop the pot in a moment of heated confusion, rather than invoking a potion or scroll best used elsewhere. About the only thing left to mention is that the game comes in a smaller box, with the cartridge itself now having a 'hook' which makes it easier to remove. Not that you're likely to be taking it back out this decade.**



SHORTS

SKI OR DIE
Electronic Arts ■ C64 ■
£9.99/£14.99
Originally reviewed: TGM031.

You'd have thought that after the problems encountered getting a PC version to look as good as *Skate or Die* did, the C64 version would be a doddle. Not so. The graphics are more than disappointing, the sound forgettable, and playability non-existent.

MC
Machine update: 50%

PROPHECY I: THE VIKING CHILD
Electronic Zoo ■ Atari ST ■
£19.99

Welcome to Odin's world. You play Brian, a child destined to become one of the greatest heroes in history. Odin's evil forces don't like the idea of a potential hero in their midst, so they kidnap your family and friends in an attempt to foil the prophecy. To preserve your destiny you must save your relatives.

There are 16 magical lands to negotiate before you reach and defeat the evil god, Loki (half brother to Thor as all mythology buffs will know). There are adversaries aplenty, which can be defeated initially with a knife, and later on with more powerful weapons.



The gameplay bears more than a passing resemblance to *Wonder Boy*, although graphics are bland, with mediocre sprites. *Treasure Trap* is definitely the pick of this month's Electronic Zoo releases.

MC
Machine rating: 70%

SIM CITY
Infogrames
■ Atari ST ■
£24.99
Originally reviewed: TGM026.

TGM STAR PLAYER

Ha, ha. Why should Amiga owners be the only ones who have to endure the late nights that *Sim City* has brought upon them? Now ST owners will have to stay up till all hours of the morning playing this amazing game. There are a few aesthetic changes which make the game slightly trickier to master, but everything is identical. Get it (before it gets you) (ahem — Ed).

MC Machine update: 90%

DRAGON'S LAIR
Empire/Readysoft
■ Atari ST ■ £44.95
Originally reviewed: TGM016.

The laser disc version of *Dragon's Lair* was reviewed on the ST a long while back — but how many people have got a laser disc player? The ST floppy disk version has been far too long coming, and now it's finally arrived is unlikely to raise any eyebrows. Cartoony graphics and impressive sound effects still don't compensate for the lack of content.

MC
Machine update: 75%

SUPER GRID RUNNER
Llamasoft ■ Amiga ■ £10.95

After the disappointing *Photon Storm* (reviewed last issue), the Yak returns to well-trodden territory. Again, the Earth is under attack. This time from the green Slimelords of Xtharrgg. As luck would have it, a prototype of a new starfighter is ready for testing. The Vorton Hyper X13 is on the runway and ready for action, and only you can pilot the thing.

Your ship is based within the lower half of the screen, with alien scum flying down from all angles. However, even with 64 levels — the first 32 are directly accessible from the menu screen — the game is just a simple *Centipede* game. There's little variation, but the usual Minter presentation and amazing speed just about keep the game above water.



MC Machine rating: 75%

ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE ROBOT MONSTERS
Tengen/Domark ■ Spectrum
■ £9.99/£14.99
Originally reviewed: TGM031.

TGM STAR PLAYER

Jake and Duke are on the case as two rough, tough SWAT operatives who must stop the Reptilon invasion. On the Spectrum, *Escape from the Planet of the Robot Monsters* starts with an impressive intro sequence explaining the plot of the game along with a catchy tune (128K). A nice touch is the arcade game's humourous atmosphere; watch what happens when your character falls over the side. Purchase is recommended.

MC
Machine update: 91%

FIGHTER BOMBER
Activision ■ Amstrad ■
£9.99/£14.99
Originally reviewed: TGM024.

All the bugs seem to be ironed out of this warmongering piece of software. Like the Spectrum version reviewed a couple of issues ago, the front-end, with the spinning 3-D representations of the planes, is impressive and the missions are pretty tough. More of a flight sim than a blast.

MC
Machine update: 78%

PROJECTYLE
Electronic Arts ■ Amiga ■
£24.99
Originally reviewed: TGM032.

Identical to the Amiga version. Graphics, sound and playability are retained in this great three-player game.

MC Machine update: 82%

POWER DRIFT
Asmik ■ PC Engine ■
£29.99
Originally reviewed: TGM025.

4x4 racing at its wildest! Low-slung off-road vehicles speed around lurching roller coaster-style tracks in a bid to attain the treasured Power Drift trophy. There are a total of nine tracks and to work your way through you must finish in the top three of every race.

Graphics are highly colourful and fairly detailed. Track/scenery moves jerkily but high speed means you only really notice this when watching someone else play. Snatches of speech and raucous effects provide suitably energetic backing to the action. Although visually it's not quite as good as Activision's Amiga conversion, playability's high — it's the best racing game currently available for the PC Engine.

WL Machine update: 87%

KLAX
Tengen/Domark ■ Amiga ■
£19.99
Originally reviewed: TGM030.

It's disappointing that even with the impressive graphics and sound, the Amiga version of *Klax* still doesn't push the host machine. The action is just as frenetic as other versions with much practice needed.

MC
Machine update: 86%

KLAX
Tengen/Domark ■ Amstrad ■
£9.99/£14.99
Originally reviewed TGM030.

Despite the usual blocky and garish Amstrad sprites, *Klax* manages to be playable. Sound is a bit disappointing, a twee title tune leads to insipid in-game effects — playability's there, though.

MC Machine update: 84%

KLAX
Tengen/Domark ■ C64
■ £9.99/£14.99
Originally reviewed: TGM030.

TGM STAR PLAYER

The C64 game is as playable as the other versions with bold colourful sprites and backdrops. The winning formula can't fail.

MC
Machine rating: 87%



ANARCHY
Psygnosis ■ Atari ST ■
£19.99

I shan't waste space trying to make a boring plot sound interesting. *Anarchy* is a blatant *Defender* clone without doubt. All the regulars are there: pesky aliens nicking your canisters from the bottom of the screen and flying upwards etc, etc. In fact, the 16-bits could do with a decent game of this genre. Trouble is, the game may look and sound like *Defender*, but it sure doesn't play like it. Ship movement is slow and unresponsive, firing even more so. You'd do better to hunt out the original arcade machine and buy that.

MC
Machine rating: 50%

EMLYN HUGHES INTERNATIONAL SOCCER
Audiogenic ■ Amiga ■ £24.99
Originally reviewed: TGM017.

It's taken ages for the 16-bit versions to appear, and there're too late. With *Kick Off 2* out, they'd have to be something pretty special to make any impression, and they're not. Even so, the game's quite playable and options allow much customising, but the actual match is average in comparison — unlike the sound effects which are rather good. As a change to *Kick Off*, it's probably quite attractive — but why buy second best?

MC
Machine update: 75%

YOLANDA
Millennium ■ Atari ST ■
£19.99

Greek goddess Hera is so jealous of luscious Yolanda that she's cast a spell on her: any man who falls in love with her will die. To lift the curse, Yolanda has to perform 12 tasks, each of which involves an array of platforms — all liable to burst into flames at any times — that are occupied by large, dangerous monsters.

All graphics use few colours, backgrounds and platforms repetitive, sprites crude are poorly animated. Music's old-fashioned, as are effects, but the scream as Yolanda's incinerated is good.

...Just as well because it's a sound you hear very often. Stay too long on the same platform, it bursts into flames: death. Jump onto the wrong platform, it burst into flames: death. Mistime a jump, land on a wiggling spider: death. You die a lot in this game — which wouldn't be too disastrous but both graphics and sound are highly outdated. Gameplay is ancient platform which really says it all.

WL
Machine rating: 30%

WHIP RUSH
Sega ■ Mega Drive ■
£24.95

Well I've seen so many Japanese shoot-'em-ups I'm not even going to make up a plot for this one. Fly right, blast ships and collect weapons pods. The weapon you gain can be changed by shooting the pod and the speed your ship moves at (though not scrolling speed) is adjustable as you go. Scrolling switches to vertical at intervals through the game.

Four-layer parallax scrolling is smooth but backgrounds lack detail and are short on colour. Sprite designs are good but again detail is lacking. Effects are good and there are some excellent pieces of music.

Being able to vary the ship's speed (any of eight settings) at any time is a nice idea, but in practice it should've been reserved for the title screen. It's quite easy to accidentally change speed and find yourself moving faster or slower than expected — both can be fatal. Playability's high and the switching scrolling direction keeps the action fresh. Best, though, are opposing ships' names, including Sandwich Man, Master Braster (not a misprint!), Unsociable and Bitch!

WL Machine rating: 79%

LAST NINJA 2
System 3 ■ Amiga ■ £24.99
Originally reviewed: TGM014.

As with the 8-bit versions, both of the 16-bit games are tricky to control. Sure, the background graphics are great on the Amiga (they should be), but the game is old, and there are plenty more complex 16-bit games out this month. Good, but not that good.

MC
Machine update: 70%

LAST NINJA 2
System 3 ■ Atari ST ■
£24.99
Originally reviewed: TGM014

An annoying title tune kicks off the ST version, but can thankfully be turned off. The gameplay is identical to the Amiga, complete with slow sprites which detract from the enjoyment. The presentation was amazing on the 8-bits, but 16-bit owners come to expect this sort of quality — and demand more depth than this old game can give.

MC
Machine update: 70%

WILD LIFE
New Deal ■ Amiga ■ £19.95

I don't think I've seen such a lookalike game since *Denaris* cloned *R-Type*. *Wild Life* looks too like Infogrames' *Safari Guns* to be true.

As a wildlife reporter you are given an assignment to photograph animals in four parts of the world. In each of the Arctic, Australia, India and Canada you must take three shots of three animals. And that's the only difference from *Safari Guns* — different scenery.

Also like *Safari Guns*, *Wild Life* is very playable in the short term, but after a while boredom sets in. Unlike *Safari Guns* you don't even get the chance to view the shots taken.

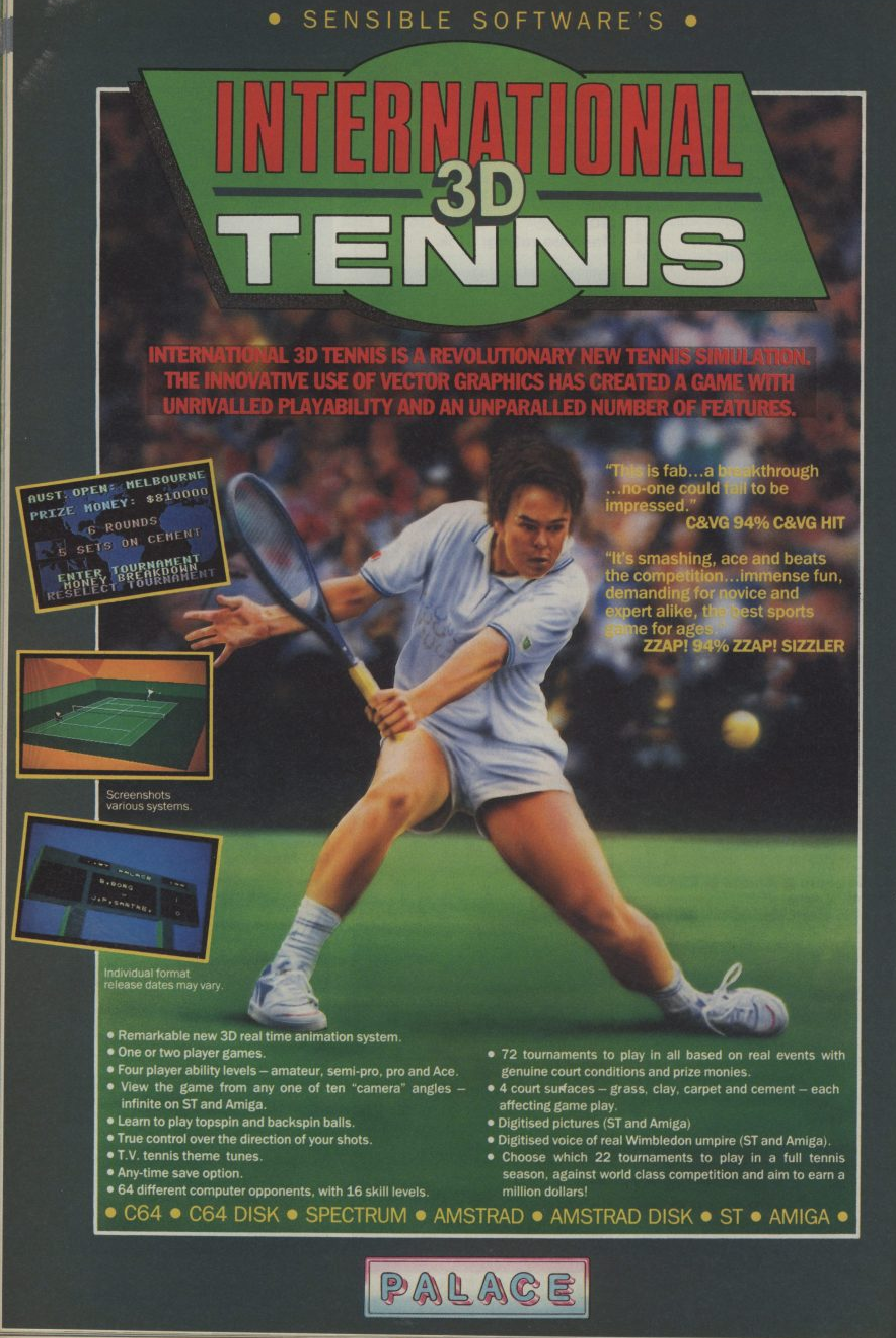
MC Machine rating: 55%



WILD LIFE
New Deal ■ Atari ST ■ £19.95
See Amiga review.

Graphically identical to the Amiga game, ST *Wild Life* quickly becomes tedious when you realise all you have to do is press the shutter and shoot a few bad guys. Even when you are shot, first-aid kits appear regularly — the toughest part of this game is identifying some of the more exotic creatures to be shot. I fear this may be a game for incurable insomniacs.

MC Machine rating: 55%



• SENSIBLE SOFTWARE'S •
INTERNATIONAL 3D TENNIS
INTERNATIONAL 3D TENNIS IS A REVOLUTIONARY NEW TENNIS SIMULATION. THE INNOVATIVE USE OF VECTOR GRAPHICS HAS CREATED A GAME WITH UNRIVALLED PLAYABILITY AND AN UNPARALLED NUMBER OF FEATURES.
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C&VG 94% C&VG HIT
"It's smashing, ace and beats the competition…immense fun, demanding for novice and expert alike, the best sports game for ages."
ZZAP! 94% ZZAP! SIZZLER
Screenshots various systems.
Individual format release dates may vary.
• Remarkable new 3D real time animation system.
• One or two player games.
• Four player ability levels – amateur, semi-pro, pro and Ace.
• View the game from any one of ten "camera" angles – infinite on ST and Amiga.
• Learn to play topspin and backspin balls.
• True control over the direction of your shots.
• T.V. tennis theme tunes.
• Any-time save option.
• 64 different computer opponents, with 16 skill levels.
• 72 tournaments to play in all based on real events with genuine court conditions and prize monies.
• 4 court surfaces – grass, clay, carpet and cement – each affecting game play.
• Digitised pictures (ST and Amiga)
• Digitised voice of real Wimbledon umpire (ST and Amiga).
• Choose which 22 tournaments to play in a full tennis season, against world class competition and aim to earn a million dollars!
• C64 • C64 DISK • SPECTRUM • AMSTRAD • AMSTRAD DISK • ST • AMIGA •
PALACE

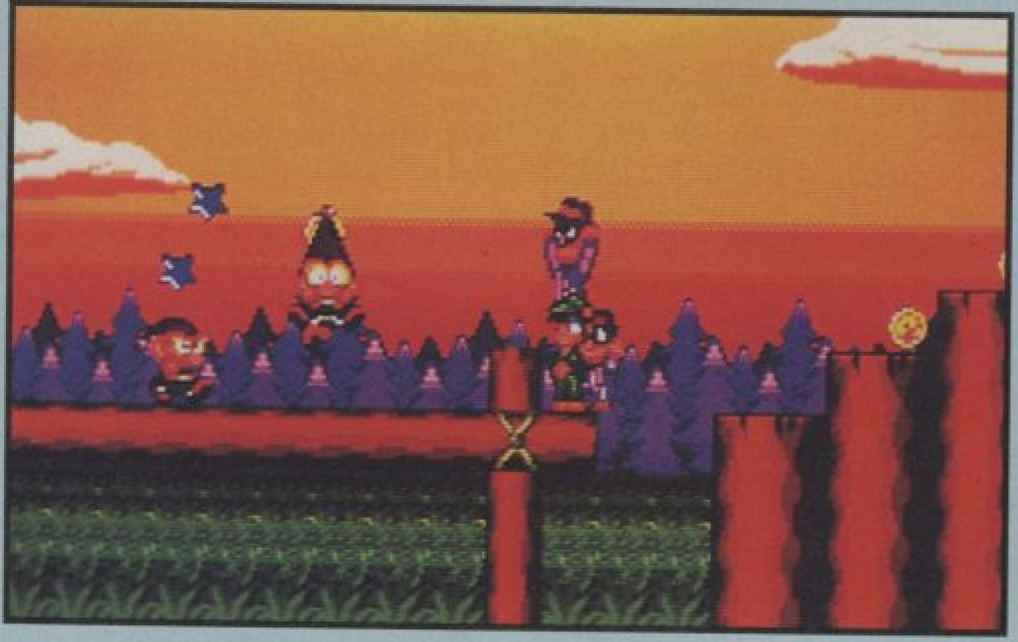
BLUE BLINK
NHK Vook ■ PC Engine ■
£29.99

Something with such a banal title as this, especially when the said *Blink* is a magical flying blue donkey (honest!), just *had* to be an Engine game. You actually control a short man in green clothing who, with two gangster-type characters mimicking his every move just a few pixels behind him, is making his way to Gurosu Castle for some reason, the last of five 'worlds'. He and his companions chuck blue (of course) throwing stars at tortoises, armadillos and gnomes, which drop handy items. The leader of the trio can be changed so that other weapons come into use. In the first three situations where gangsters and leader would die, Blue Blink flutters by and restores health.

Sprites are small, cute, detailed and well animated. Either there's a female member of the mob or one of the gangsters is a transvestite! Backgrounds are pleasant and scroll smoothly, but there's not much detail in them. Tunes are suitably dreamy and twee, effects standard Engine ones.

The addition of two characters following the one under your control isn't completely new but it's very rarely used. However, it doesn't really change the game, just triples your firepower and makes jumping movements look interesting. Otherwise, *Blue Blink* is ordinary console platform, one requiring a hell of a lot of wandering around between worlds.

WL
Machine rating: 66%



GREG NORMAN'S ULTIMATE GOLF
Gremlin Graphics ■ Atari ST ■
£24.99

The 'White Shark' has put his name to this product, the first to give a full view of the contours of each hole, using an overlayed 3-D grid. Many factors affect a shot, the angle of the club head to the ball, angle of swing, wind, lie of the ball and, of course, strength. The latter is controlled by the usual quickly growing and shrinking bar graph, also determining hook and slice.

The grid landscape is unusual and interesting to look at but it and trees upon it lack detail. The Greg sprite is vaguely drawn and poorly animated but the smaller option graphics are pleasant and the ball moves fairly realistically. Sounds are few but the whack of club against ball is highly effective.

Ultimate Golf tries to expand upon the bog-standard *Leaderboard* rip-off with its grid landscape and adjustable swing and strike angle but is no major improvement. The grid looks weird but doesn't help much and adjustable factors make incalcuable and usually unnecessary changes to strokes. The caddy takes a very long time to choose which club you should use, an irritating interruption to a plain game.

WL Machine rating: 73%

ANTAGO
Art of Dreams ■ Atari ST ■
£19.99

Remember Connect 4, the game where you had to drop coloured counters into a frame and line up four of them in a row, a bit like Noughts and Crosses but with gravity? Remember the stupid MB Games advert that made it all seem very tense and dramatic? Well *Antago*'s pretty similar except the counters are pushed on from the sides of a five by five grid, shifting along any counters in its way, and you, as a little devil, must connect five. Your counters are actually spiked balls while your opponent, an angel controlled by the computer at one of several skill levels or another person, has clouds.

The boards (there are three designs) are attractively shaded and the counters are good, too. The devil sprite's brilliantly devious looking but the angel's just too cute. Both are poorly animated and effects are naff droning bleeps.

Do you really want to waste valuable games-buying dosh on something as limited as a push version of Connect 4 (well, five)? The computer is a challenging opponent but there's so little to the game, you won't care about beating it at high levels. Playing against a friend is more amusing but Connect 4's a lot cheaper.

WL
Machine rating: 40%

ANTAGO
Art of Dreams ■ Amiga ■
£19.99
See Atari ST review.

Graphically, as near to the ST as makes no difference (you *still* want to punch that angel's face face in!) but there's a funky title tune using Art of *Noise* sounds. The few effects/jingles are suitably fun.

WL
Machine rating: 42%

GREG NORMAN'S ULTIMATE GOLF
Gremlin Graphics ■ Amiga ■
£24.99
See Atari ST review.

A shorter screen gives a CinemaScope effect but although quickly drawn, the landscape's far from impressive. Ball movement is iffy, ineffectively shrinking in apparent size and sometimes taking a stupidly and irritatingly long time to settle. The nice thwack of a shot in the ST version has been replaced by the sound of a schoolmaster's cane being swished through the air.

WL Machine rating: 72%

THUNDER FORCE III
Techno Soft ■ Mega Drive/Genesis ■ £24.95

Just as the Engine's baseball game, *Power League*, is reaching its third version, so the 16-bit Sega's blast has a second sequel. In your multi-weapon Thunder Force ship, you have six worlds to shoot the hell out of, each guarded by a particularly large creature and all but one of them selectable from a starmap.

The joypad's three buttons fire a weapon (major surprise), change weapon and increase ship speed. Which button does what is changeable from an options screen. Flying rightward, some of the attacking ships and monsters leave behind icons to give (to name but a few) claw, twin shot, sever, lancer and hunter weapons.

Parallax scrolling's silky-smooth and, at certain times, very fast. Weapons are a dazzling display of pyrotechnics, and imaginatively designed and well-shaded sprites attack in great numbers. Larger adversaries, ones in mid-level not just the end, are impressive and the fire level, with swirling background and bursts of flame, is amazing. Sound effects are many and arcade-like, but oriental-accented speech is a bit distorted. Music's fast-paced and suits the action.

Thunder Force III is one of the most professional, arcade-like console games I've ever seen. It has all the challenge and difficulty, too (lucky there are continue plays), and bags of playability. Nine types of weapon enable various assault tactics to be used and selectable levels mean you won't got bored of seeing the same old things. The best shoot-'em-up on the Mega Drive.

WL Machine rating: 85%

DAMOCLES MERCENARY II
Novagen ■ Amiga ■ £24.99
Originally reviewed: TGM028.

The comet Damocles is due to hit the planet Eris in a few hours, and it's just as hard to stop it on the Amiga. The scrolling and sprites are fast and smooth guaranteeing more sleepless nights.

MC Machine update: 92%

RICK DANGEROUS
Firebird ■ Atari ST ■ £19.99
Originally reviewed: TGM020.

Strange that this game's taken so long to reach the ST. A considerate additional option allows you to start on any of the first four levels, although this in no way makes the game any easier. Buy this without hesitation. Good news, too, is that there's another Rick adventure in production.

MC Machine update: 80%

ASTATE
New Deal Productions ■ Amiga ■ £19.99
Originally reviewed: TGM029.

Postcard scenes scroll jerkily by before the game begins, with the same flat backgrounds and crudely drawn and animated sprites of the ST original. Music is gratingly discordant but the pick, drill etc of your architect's kit have reasonable sounds and a pleasant female voice announces the beginning an end of each game. Still, a fruitless wander around a few countryside screens.

WL Machine update: 53%



BLOOD MONEY
Psygnosis ■ C64 ■ £9.99/£14.99
Originally reviewed: TGM019.

I'm amazed that Psygnosis have done such a good job. I never thought the Amiga version could be translated to the ST, never mind the poor C64. Graphically and sonically there's little to complain about. There's a pleasant title tune and accurate sound fx. Buy, buy, buy!

MC Machine update: 90%

SKIDZ
Gremlin Graphics ■ Amiga ■ £19.99



You're a real rad skate dude. You've got the shades, the stubble, the wheels, and your favourite video game is freestyle half-pipe on Lynx *California Games*. And you're really concerned about the amount of litter in your town. Er, maybe you're not so cool after all. But anyway, on bike or skateboard you must collect litter and deposit it in bins within a time limit, whilst avoiding hazards and completing minor sub-tasks. Your equipment and health can be restored at a shop and ultimately you'll face the challenge of The Race.

Within each level, graphics are fairly repetitive and averagely detailed. Sprites try to be cartoony but in the end are vague and unexciting, particularly cats and dogs, which look like sacks being blown along. Scrolling's smooth, animation isn't, and jolly music has some cool vocal samples.

Skidz reminds me of *Skate Crazy*, an 8-bit Gremlin product of mid-'88, where the player negotiated a series of obstacle courses on roller skates. In the *penalty* round litter had to be collected under a time limit, so it seems a bit odd that Gremlin have resurrected it now on 16-bit. Thankfully the result isn't as bad as it sounds. There are two control systems which is just as well because the default one is awkward; with the second one *Skidz* is fairly enjoyable if only for a limited time.

WL Machine rating: 72%

ITALY SOCCER '90
Simulmondo ■ PC ■ £19.99

Another football game, yet *again* based upon the 1990 World Cup. At least Simulmondo are an Italian software house, which can't be bad considering it's the host nation. Simulmondo have looked into their (cracked) crystal ball, and found only eight competing teams. Matches are between six and ten minutes long and are viewed as if watching from the stands.

Aaargh! CGA! This is the first PC game in a long time that doesn't offer at least EGA graphics. The pitch is cyan with checked purple stripes and the crowd are a scatter of identical blank faces. Sprites are very small (although their boots are comparitively huge) and badly animated — they look like they're doing the can-can. Effects are few and are the usual PC screeches.

It's difficult to know what to say here. The pathetic graphics are overwhelmingly off-putting, and when you force yourself to play it's just as slow and dull as expected. *Italy Soccer '90* is as old-fashioned in its gameplay as it is in its graphics. Avoid at all costs.

WL
Machine rating: 8%

ITALY SOCCER '90
Simulmondo ■ C64 ■ £9.99/£14.99
See PC review.

There are 16 teams to choice from in this version *and* you can choose their shirt colour. The pitch is plain green with thin markings and scrolls very slowly, juddering every couple of seconds. Sprites, little more than stick men, are hunched over, swing their arms as the go and crawl along at a yawn-inducing rate. Effects are few and simple. Probably the most laid-back football game on the C64.

WL
Machine rating: 10%

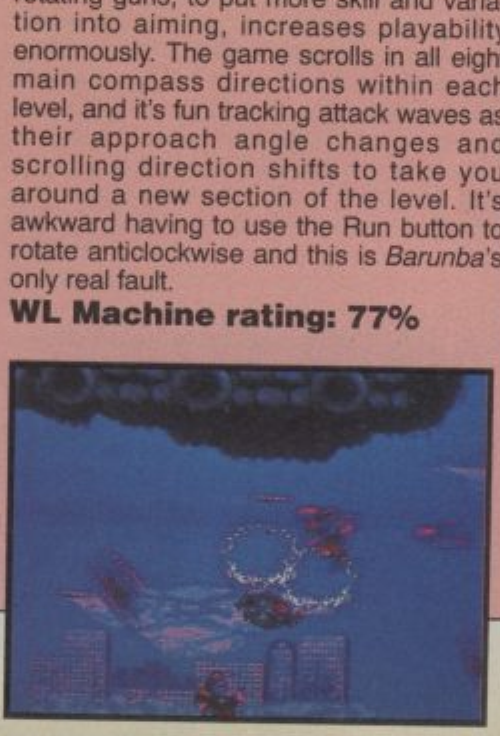
BARUNBA
Namcot ■ PC Engine ■ £29.99

Those mad professors just don't give up. If they're not mixing new chemical concoctions to turn people into homicidal maniacs or making bizarre machines, they're creating new lifeforms by stitching bits of old ones together. One's making a nuisance of himself in *Barunba*, so in your strange spherical flying machine you head for his castle fortress. The prof's minions attack you but your machine's armed with twin cannons that can be rotated clockwise (button one) or anti-clockwise (Run button).

Graphics are fairly simplistic, sprites short on colour, detail and animation frames, and backgrounds are little better. Scrolling's smooth in all directions, music's yer (very) average Japanese console tune and effects are ordinary.

Although graphics, sonics and levels are that of a very plain, mediocre shoot-'em-up, the unspectacular addition of rotating guns, to put more skill and variation into aiming, increases playability enormously. The game scrolls in all eight main compass directions within each level, and it's fun tracking attack waves as their approach angle changes and scrolling direction shifts to take you around a new section of the level. It's awkward having to use the Run button to rotate anticlockwise and this is *Barunba*'s only real fault.

WL Machine rating: 77%



BE BALL
Hudson Soft ■ PC Engine ■
£29.99

Why should two pre-pubescent Japanese girls push giant glass balls around while being pursued by various wild creatures? Your guess is as good as mine but it's the plot to this product of a warped mind. The girls (or girl — there's a single player option) push or pull red, blue, green and black balls around each single-screen level and position them on the appropriately coloured bases. The balls can be kicked to temporarily put the tortoises, gorillas, hedgehogs and so on out of action. Included is a mini football game, Kick Ball, where a single-screen pitch is lined with reflective walls and the ball's semi-controlled path usually results in lucky rather than skilfully played goals. There's also a maze editor, to create your own levels, but without the ability to save it's not really worth the effort.

Sprites are large and of the traditional cute Japanese nature. Creatures are pretty ordinary but the girls are excellently defined and animated. The balls themselves are very bright and realistically shaded. Music's electronic oriental and spot effects are functional.

Be Ball is an unusual game design but then what do you expect from the Japanese? It's very simple, too, just move objects to certain places. Switches and fading balls (which can only be moved when fully coloured) complicate further levels but the main hindrances are other balls. Relentless pursuers mean one-player games become too difficult and although two-player games can be fun, *Be Ball* is too straightforward for its own good.

WL
Machine rating: 71%





THE PLAGUE
The Software Business/Innerprise Software ■ Amiga ■ £24.95

You're a hunky guy with a firearm fetish on a horrible planet where a plague has mutated people into grotesque psychos. Therefore there's only one thing you can do: rush around and blow the freaks to pieces. It's not quite that simple because non-humanoid creatures, fire and bubbling poisonous liquids can also reduce your energy.

Background graphics are whole-screen, colourful, a little short on detail but smooth's scrolling. The large sprites are equally bright but ineptly, unrealistically shaded and animated. Sound effects are old-fashioned but title music's pleasingly moody and although selectable in-game music uses decidedly C64 sounds, it's a great piece.

The graphics are a lot of the problem with *The Plague*, characters so big that an instant after they appear they're right next to the player sprite — you have to fire frequently, whether you can see opponents or not, to stay alive. Early platform jumps require undue skill and three continue plays take you right back to the beginning of the level, almost useless. Repetitive and awkward sections only serve to put you off playing again.

WL Machine rating: 60%

PSYCHO CHASER
Naxat Soft ■ PC Engine ■
£29.99

The main character, presumably the Psycho Chaser, is a big, robust robot of the future, dedicated to truth, justice and the American way of blowing the hell out of bad guys first and asking questions later. He has variable strength fire, multi-way, buster and thunder weapons (enhanced with pick-ups) to destroy the various rogue robots he encounters.

The Chaser is an excellent sprite, metallic and mechanical, but his animation, although good, is too slow for the speed at which he moves around the landscape. Other sprites are less well designed and backdrops are composed of frequently repeated blocks. Effects are lively but music's hardly noticeable.

The character you control is on foot yet *Psycho Chaser* plays just like any vertically-scrolling spaceship shoot-'em-up. Being able to move freely between four weapons is nice but, other than the occasional use of 'thunder', you'll find fire the only one worthwhile. Blasting games are commonplace on the Engine so you needn't worry about this one.

WL
Machine rating: 53%



BASKET MANAGER
Simulmondo ■ Amiga ■
£19.99

'Yeah, basket, go for it, you can hold that scrap of waste paper *and* the cola can!' Ahem. You're actually a basket*ball team* manager and have a few million dollars to spend on buying eight players, either professionals or rookies, but pros are *very* expensive. Matches are shown from above on a scrolling court and passes can be made straight ahead or directed with use of a swinging arrow.

Player portraits are pretty similar to each other, all equally scruffily drawn. The pitch is neatly done and scrolls well. Sprites are reasonable in definition but mediocre in animation, and effects are just the repetitive thwack of bouncing ball on court and one or two garbled ref shouts.

Unless memory fails me, this is the first basketball game to use a plan view, so it's a shame playability is so very ordinary. It's a pain to get into the game — as copy protection, you have to put the names and fees from the manual to half of the faces you pick onscreen (tedious). The court is way too small, a brief dash and you're already at your opponent's basket, and controls are sometimes unresponsive.

WL
Machine rating: 51%

CHASE HQ
Taito ■ PC Engine ■ £29.99
Originally reviewed: TGM025.

Immediately loses the appeal of the coin-op because Nancy's speech is in Japanese! In-game speech is missing, replaced with good effects but dreary music. Sprites are flat and blocky, backgrounds no better with pathetic colour graduation in the sky. However, it moves smoothly and quickly and gives a good illusion of movement. There are continue plays but even so it's difficult to catch criminals in this version.

WL
Machine update: 78%



DJ BOY

Sega/Kaneko ■ Mega Drive/Genesis ■ £24.95

DJ Boy isn't the cool, laid-back and fashionable dude he used to be. A gang of thugs have kidnapped his girlfriend and, rather het up about it, the Boy has dashed off in pursuit. Roller-skating through horizontally scrolling levels, he punches and kicks various nasty types who leave behind coins. Each level ends either with a massed onslaught or a particularly large thug. To make things easier, DJ Boy can spend coins at a shop to obtain energy, extra speed, increased punch strength and so on.

Sprites are fun, bright and cartoon-like, but animation's jerky. Scrolling's smooth, music's fun but effects are repetitive and fairly simple.

...Like the game, really. Dodge, kick, punch, collect, game over, yawn. You have four units of energy but only one life and no continue plays so it'll be a long time before you get past the first major adversary, the big momma — although it's likely that you'll give up first and play something more amusing and worthwhile.

WL Machine rating: 67%

ADIDAS CHAMPIONSHIP FOOTBALL

Ocean ■ C64 ■ £9.99/£14.99

Ocean are sensible. They weren't going to pick things from the normal list containing Italy, 1990, Italia, World Cup, '90 and Soccer and juggle them around to name their footie game. Nope, they got the licence to a famous sporting goods manufacturer. But still, you choose your team from the 24 qualifiers for this year's World Cup then all the teams are divided into six groups. Check on the fixtures, choose match duration, choose formation and begin the first match. The pitch is shown in plan view and the ball is free-running — it doesn't stick to players' feet so you must push it along.

The fancy text title sequence is good but it all goes downhill from there. The options screen is adequate but the game's terrible. A tacky status panel occupies the bottom quarter of the screen yet the crudely shaded pitch scrolls slowly, with slight judder, and there's a glitch where it meets the panel. Sprites are blocky, malformed and unrealistically animated. Effects are just white noise but music's well composed with quality sounds.

I think Ocean must've spent all their money on licensing Adidas because the game itself is very weak indeed. Options are few, graphics are appalling, yet it's loaded in *four* parts. Not so bad on disk but horrendous on cassette, a long wait before you reach a highly disappointing match.

WL

Machine rating: 30%

ARMED F

Big Don ■ PC Engine ■ £29.99

Armed F? Sounds like an Indian mixing DJ to me, but it's actually the attack formation of the heroes in this game, who're facing incredible odds. Well *you* are actually, because despite implications to the contrary, it's a one-player game. The formation bit applies when you collect pods to give two side guns. They can be positioned to the side and front or back of the main ship when the necessary 'F' (formation) pods have been collected.

Graphics are fairly simplistic, lacking detail, shading and using few colours. Scrolling's smooth but slow, music old-fashioned and repetitive, and effects crude and archaic.

Armed F's based on a coin-op, a fairly obscure Nichibutsu one I've never seen. If it's anything like this conversion then it must be a pretty naff machine. Crusty old graphics perfectly match the decrepit gameplay, sort of like a vertical *Nemesis* but without the fun. You lose *all* pick-ups when you die, particularly infuriating because the game's difficulty level's set very high. Only masochists need apply.

WL

Machine rating: 26%

TURN IT

Tale/Kingsoft ■ Amiga ■ £19.99

An oriental game in the style of *Mah Jong* and *Shanghai*, each level of *Turn It* is filled with a number of tiles, each with a design or Japanese character. Under a time limit, pairs of like tiles are clicked on to turn them until none are left. It's not as easy as it sounds because a different design of tile cannot be between the two tiles — the first pairs taken have to be from the board edge — and the path taken can only turn twice.

Graphics are really just the tiles but at least they're neatly drawn — although the differences in colour are slight between some otherwise identical tiles so it's easy to accidentally select a non-pair. Sound is some reasonable music and a couple of clacking effects.

Turn It is a very simple idea but is one that frequently has you scratching your head. However, this is because time limits are tight so you have to find pairs pretty quickly. Otherwise, it's just a case of looking for matching designs in reachable places — not the most interesting of pastimes.

WL Machine rating: 61%

F-1 MANAGER

Simulmondo ■ Amiga ■ £19.99

Prepare to qualify! But before burning rubber, you have a budget to spend on driver, engine and pit team. You can then visit the workshop to adjust suspension, tyres and chassis aerodynamics before qualifying and racing.

Options screens are bright and clear but in-game graphics are pretty naff. The cars, viewed as usual from behind, are vaguely drawn in few colours and wander around a narrow, unconvincing track. Effects are few but music's decent synth-pop.

Simulmondo (they're Italian) have decided that simple pedal-to-the-metal race gameplay is not enough, and so have thrown in a few options à la *Ferrari Formula One*. That's taken care of reasonably well (although finances are too tight) but Simulmondo have forgotten about the race itself. Poor graphics and mouse control destroy any feel that may've been generated and then gameplay's interrupted when anything goes wrong, killing it off stone dead.

WL

Machine rating: 40%

F-1 MANAGER

Simulmondo ■ C64 ■ £9.99/£14.99

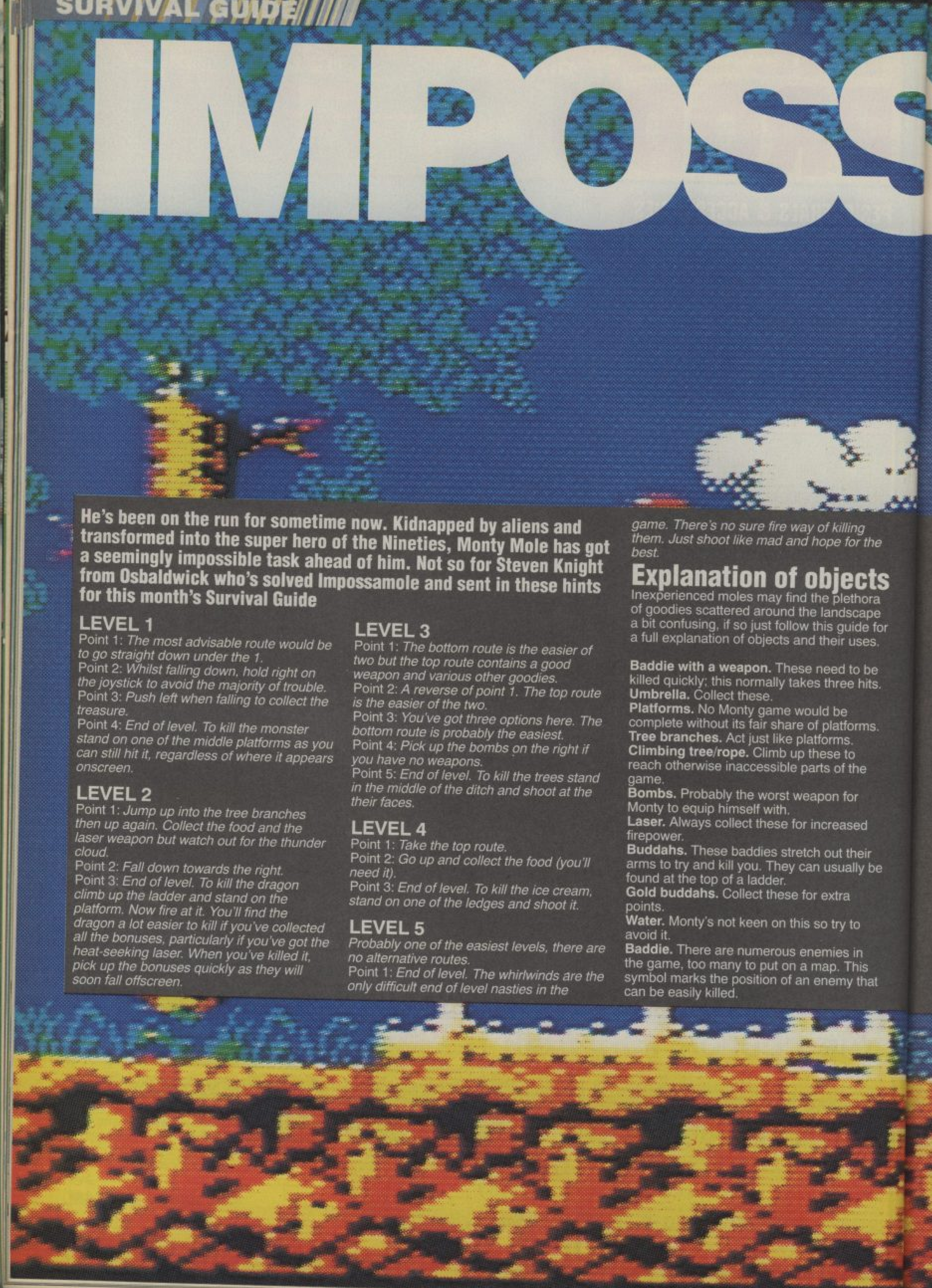
See Amiga review.

Options screens use ugly, blocky little graphics that are accompanied by a repetitive, grating tune. Your car, viewed as if you're sitting in the cockpit and have an extremely long neck, is malformed and undetailed, and what can be seen of the driver's body, he's suffering from mild malnutrition. The track wobbles unconvincingly along but horizontal scrolling's fine in the race section itself and sprites are quite good. But as you don't directly control the car in this section it's rather wasted.

WL

Machine rating: 29%

IMPOSS



He's been on the run for sometime now. Kidnapped by aliens and transformed into the super hero of the Nineties, Monty Mole has got a seemingly impossible task ahead of him. Not so for Steven Knight from Osbaldwick who's solved Impossamole and sent in these hints for this month's Survival Guide

LEVEL 1

Point 1: *The most advisable route would be to go straight down under the 1.*
Point 2: *Whilst falling down, hold right on the joystick to avoid the majority of trouble.*
Point 3: *Push left when falling to collect the treasure.*
Point 4: *End of level. To kill the monster stand on one of the middle platforms as you can still hit it, regardless of where it appears onscreen.*

LEVEL 2

Point 1: *Jump up into the tree branches then up again. Collect the food and the laser weapon but watch out for the thunder cloud.*
Point 2: *Fall down towards the right.*
Point 3: *End of level. To kill the dragon climb up the ladder and stand on the platform. Now fire at it. You'll find the dragon a lot easier to kill if you've collected all the bonuses, particularly if you've got the heat-seeking laser. When you've killed it, pick up the bonuses quickly as they will soon fall offscreen.*

LEVEL 3

Point 1: *The bottom route is the easier of two but the top route contains a good weapon and various other goodies.*
Point 2: *A reverse of point 1. The top route is the easier of the two.*
Point 3: *You've got three options here. The bottom route is probably the easiest.*
Point 4: *Pick up the bombs on the right if you have no weapons.*
Point 5: *End of level. To kill the trees stand in the middle of the ditch and shoot at the their faces.*

LEVEL 4

Point 1: *Take the top route.*
Point 2: *Go up and collect the food (you'll need it).*
Point 3: *End of level. To kill the ice cream, stand on one of the ledges and shoot it.*

LEVEL 5

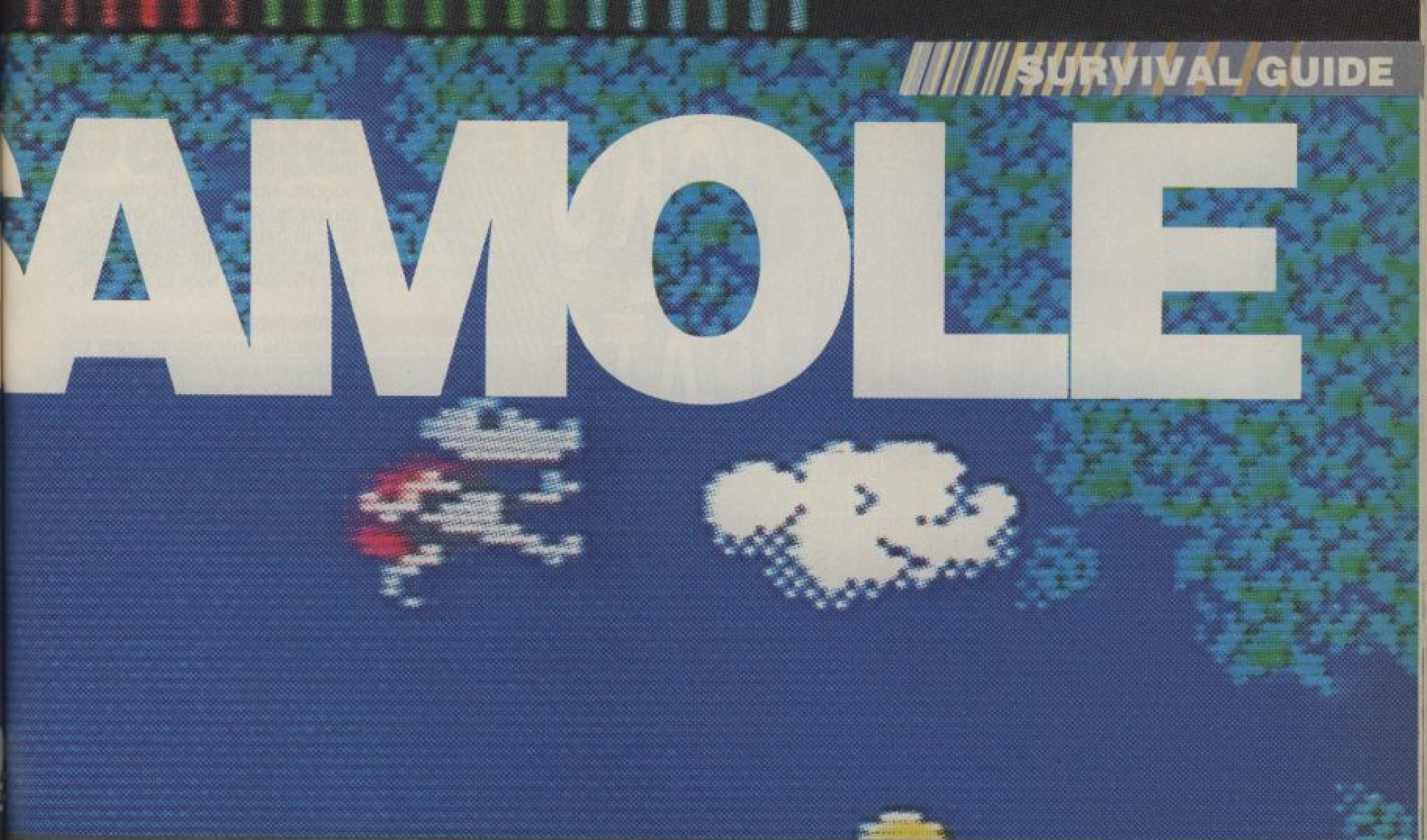
Probably one of the easiest levels, there are no alternative routes.
Point 1: *End of level. The whirlwinds are the only difficult end of level nasties in the game. There's no sure fire way of killing them. Just shoot like mad and hope for the best.*

Explanation of objects

Inexperienced moles may find the plethora of goodies scattered around the landscape a bit confusing, if so just follow this guide for a full explanation of objects and their uses.

Baddie with a weapon. These need to be killed quickly; this normally takes three hits.
Umbrella. Collect these.
Platforms. No Monty game would be complete without its fair share of platforms.
Tree branches. Act just like platforms.
Climbing tree/rope. Climb up these to reach otherwise inaccessible parts of the game.
Bombs. Probably the worst weapon for Monty to equip himself with.
Laser. Always collect these for increased firepower.
Buddahs. These baddies stretch out their arms to try and kill you. They can usually be found at the top of a ladder.
Gold buddahs. Collect these for extra points.
Water. Monty's not keen on this so try to avoid it.
Baddie. There are numerous enemies in the game, too many to put on a map. This symbol marks the position of an enemy that can be easily killed.

SAMOLE



Bird. They fly in the direction of the arrow next to them. Generally they're more annoying than dangerous.
Lightning cloud. Cannot be killed. When they get close to you they turn black and start firing lightning bolts.
Weapon power-up. Increase the effectiveness of your weapon. A maximum of three can be collected.
Golden coin. Collect these and spend them in the occasional shops that crop up.
Tea cups. Boost your energy when collected.
Conveyor belt. The direction of the arrow shows which way Monty will be moved when he stands on one.
Disappearing platforms. These platforms can only be stood upon for a short amount of time.
Worm can. Collect these. The number of worm cans in your possession are displayed at the bottom of the screen.
Green cauldron. Collectable.
Rising root or branch. Zap your energy.
Buzzing bee. These follow you around but can be killed with a few shots.
Grapes. Boost your energy when collected.
Moving tree. These look like ordinary trees but they suddenly dart towards you when you get near one. Don't panic! Either jump onto a nearby platform or jump over them.
Falling rock. There is a slight colour difference between these and stationary rocks. Walk slowly towards one and when it begins to fall, turn around and hurry back the way you came. Once the rock has crashed to the floor proceed as normal.
Crusher. A throwback to the previous Monty games. Good timing is all that is needed to avoid being squashed by one of these.
Food. Replenishes your energy.
Firing snowman. Approach one of these slowly. Otherwise it will wake up and start to throw things at you.
Moving snowball. These can be avoided by a carefully timed jump.
Claws. Just move up and down. They can't be killed but they can be easily avoided.
Moving chairlift. These appear on level four and can be used to cross stretches of water.
Spikes. Don't touch these, they sap your energy.
Polar bears. It takes a large number of shots to kill these.
Ice. Affect your movement slightly. Move slowly over ice patches to avoid sliding.
Whales. Can be used as platforms but watch out for the water spurts.
Ice blocks. You start to slip and slide as soon as you land on one of these. Jump off straight away.
Baddies on bikes. Get away from these as quickly as possible. You can kill them but you'll find that by the time you've managed to get rid of one you'll have another one on your tail.
Falling icicle. Can be avoided in the same way as the falling rocks.
Treasure. Collect for extra points.
Skulls. Collect for extra points.
Airplanes. Not a lot you can do about these. They move across the screen so fast that you just have to hope you're not in their line of fire.
Magic carpets. Carry you away from danger.
Genie. When he rises from the lamp, get out of the way as quickly as possible. Sometimes he doesn't appear and the lamp charges at you. Just jump over it to avoid its attack.
Palm trees. Acts as platforms.
Cannon. Can't be killed but can usually be avoided by moving around on nearby platforms.
Dropping birds. Drop energy-sapping bombs on you. Difficult to kill.
Rolling barrel. These can be avoided with a carefully timed jump.
Barrels. Acts as platforms.
Shooting space ship. Similar to the lightning clouds except they're better shots.
Space shuttle. Lies in some stretches of water and acts as a platform.
Arrows. Appear on level three. Sap your energy. Can be avoided with a well-timed jump.
Gun turret. Fires bullets at you. These can easily be avoided.

TGM TRICKS 'N' CHEATS

TGM readers are up to their usual tricks and cheats with a brand new batch of tips, including guides to Typhoon Thompson, Master Karateka and Prophecy I: The Viking Child. Robin Candy sorts through your letters (but he's really looking for that elusive late birthday card).

Ninja Massacre

Spectrum

Also form Ajit in London, here's the codes. **5: SNOW, 10: EASY, 15: RACK, 20: BLUE, 25: STAG, 30: HULL, 35: BEER, 40: BARD.**



Castle Master



Atari ST, Amiga

If you're still stuck on *Castle Master* (despite last month's survival guide), Lee Ellershaw and his dad from Marton have some extra hints. Surely you can polish of this game now.

The Potions

Rock Travel (in the Pottery)
After drinking this potion you will be able to travel through nearly all the doorways by throwing a rock at them.
Strength (in the Inn)
Drink this to increase your strength.
Revitalisation (in the Display Chamber)
This increases your strength. The mace in the display chamber can only be picked up if you're at full strength.

Useful places

Hospital
When you're weak go to the hospital and rest there to increase your energy.
Shrine
Go to the library and press the green book on the top shelf of the bookcase. A chair will appear. Sit on this and the chair will turn to face the shrine. There is a key on top of the golden nugget. To get it crawl to the back of the shrine and climb onto the ledge. Crawl around the ledge until you reach one of the supports holding the nugget. Now crawl slightly forwards, you should now be able to get up onto the support. Crawl towards the nugget and you should be able to see the key.
Catacombs
At first the only way to enter the catacombs is by entering a cavern. Once inside the cavern you should kill the ghost and collect the pentacle. It's now best to visit the remaining caverns and kill all the other ghosts.
Junk Room
To enter this room you've got to shoot the grey panel outside the door until it disappears. Now press the black space to open the door. There is a pentacle on one of the shelves. To get it crawl under the shelf, stand up, turn around and walk back along the shelf. You should now be able to collect the pentacle.
Granary
Remove the grain to reveal the chest. Crawl inside it, close the lid and move forwards. You will now fall into the display chamber.
Wizard's Hut
There is a key on top of the chair. To reach it, stand on the table.
How to get Granary chest key
Stand on the drawbridge and throw a rock at the switch. The drawbridge will now catapult you onto the chapel roof.
How to kill the Dragon
Shoot its eyes, horns and teeth.

How to kill Knight in Magister's Room

Run up to it and look up. Now shoot the dark area under the helmet.

Shinobi

Amiga

Thanks to AR Feachem in Sevenoaks. Start the game as usual then press **PAUSE**. Now type in **LARSXVIII** for infinite credits.



Double Dragon

Sega

Simon Morrison from Dagenham has a quick cheat for this game. Play it as normal until you get to mission 4 then perform 15 jumping reverse kicks and you will be rewarded with an infinite continue option.

Operation Thunderbolt

C64

Pity the C64 version of *Op Thunderbolt* turned out such a disappointment. Still, M Elkateb from Sutton thought it was good enough to play it to death and sent in this player's guide.

C64 cheat

Progress past level one and make sure you've got some continue plays left. When level two has loaded, start playing then abort the game (F1 followed by Run-Stop). You will be asked to rewind the tape to the start of Side B. Ignore this and leave the tape playing. You should now be able to continue the game but on level three.

Level 1

Keep your aim in the middle of the screen and then move left and right to kill the soldiers. It is advisable to hold down fire if you are a beginner for more accurate shooting. Kill the helicopters with a rocket. It shouldn't take too much practice before you can complete this level without losing a life.

Level 2

It is important to remember that the soldiers' bullets cannot affect you if they're on the other side of the screen. Keep your aim to the far side of the screen (your side).

Level 3

Even with lots of practice this level is practically impossible to complete without some continue plays. Tanks are more lethal purely because there are so many of them. If things get crowded, just use a rocket. You only need to use one bullet for mines and the deadly air-to-ground missiles.

Level 4

Accurate aiming is necessary to rescue the hostages. If a hostage gets in the way, shoot him. The heavily armed officer is not really that tough. He comes out from the right so be prepared. Hold down the fire button and follow him around. If you are feeling particularly violent, shoot him in the head.

Level 5

Basically the same as level 3.

Level 6

The men hanging from the top are deadly so wipe them out first. If it gets too crowded use a rocket. The end-of-level officer needs to be shot in the head.

Level 7

Another level which is basically the same as level 3 but this time there aren't any tanks.

Level 8

This level is a real test. Make sure you keep an eye out for any grenades thrown at you, then shoot them as they move pretty quickly.

Level 9

The hijacker is to the left of the hostage and he moves pretty quickly. Sta
y to the left of the hostage and let out a steady stream of bullets. Now guide your fire into the final officer and providing you or the hostage don't get killed it's mission accomplished.

Prophecy I: The Viking Child

Your quest to defeat Loki will be made the much easier if you use these hints sent in by Graham Oliver from Chaldon. First off here are the four codewords that you will need to get through the game: Denis <E>, Bliz, Sharkman and Nymharsw.

Weapons

BOMBS The cheapest weapons you can buy. You need to keep them in good supply for when you enter somewhere like the forest and start to fall down a great height. As you fall drop a couple of bombs to make sure that anything nasty lurking at the bottom gets its comeuppance. They're also handy for destroying annoying birds.
BOLAS A little more expensive than the bombs but nevertheless fairly useful. It normally takes three hits from a bolas to destroy most baddies.
FIRE SPRITE A brilliant weapon. These home in on your adversaries and are best kept for use against the end-of-level guardians. It normally takes 12 hits for a fire sprite to dispatch any end-of-level guardian.
STUN Freezes your enemies for a few seconds but is a bit expensive. It's only really useful when you initially enter the chamber of an end-of-level guardian, allowing you to get into position before letting rip with the fire sprites.
POTIONS Very expensive but if you're rolling in cash buy one or two just in case.

Things to buy

GLIDE Useful when there are a lot of vanishing platforms about.
CLOAK Makes you invincible for 30 seconds. Buy whenever you can.
SPEED Only useful when you're trying to escape from fast-moving baddies.
HEARTS Definitely a good buy but always check exactly how much energy you need and what the price is before buying.
EXTRA LIFE The most important thing to buy.
SHIELDS A total waste of money unless you've got money to burn, otherwise save up and buy a sword instead.
SWORD Expensive but well worth it. If you can afford it buy the top of the range model. Though it doesn't actually kill enemies any quicker it's longer than Brian's dagger so there's less chance of the enemies getting close.

Astro Marine Corps

Amiga

We didn't like this game but Jason Tullett from Sale did and sent in this useful tip.
Wait for the selection screen to appear. Press F6 **and type in any of the following codes:** Nostromo, Discovery, Dagobah, Replicants, Krull, Metropolis. **Each code word will transport you to a different starting position.**



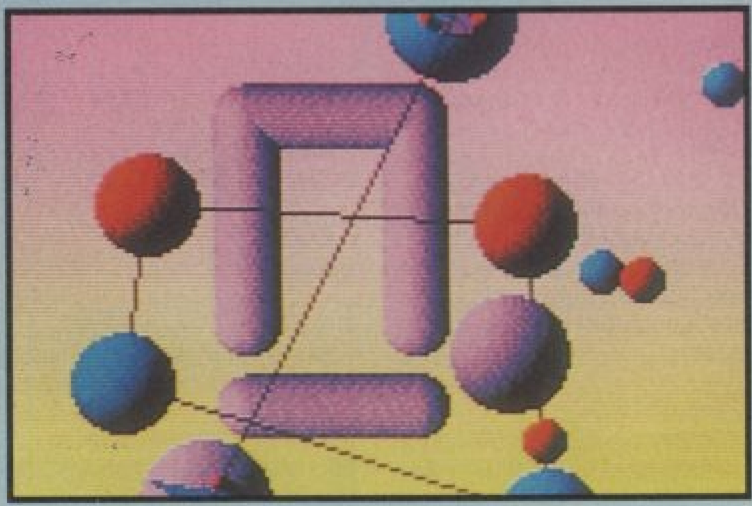


Crackdown
Atari ST

Chris Stanley from Cardiff sent in these tips. Start the game as usual and type in **SMURF** while playing the game. Now if you press F1 and F2 players one and two will be rewarded will infinite lives.

E-Motion
Atari ST, Amiga

John Thompson from Reading writes. Load the game and type in **FRANK ZAPPA** on the ST or **MOON UNIT** on the Amiga. Pressing F1 will now advance one level, while F2 will advance you ten levels.



Cobra Force
Spectrum

A thousand thanks to Ajit Tacouri in London. Just redefine the keys as **S, I, M, O** for infinite lives.

Master Karateka
Game Boy

I promised these hints last month, and promptly went and lost them. Luckily, Philip Baxter from Ponteland was good enough to send in another copy. First, though, if you're having problems figuring out all the available moves (well the instructions are in Japanese) the following list should be of some help.

Up ´ Go into running mode or up-block if in combat.
Down ´ Go into fighting mode or down-/mid-block.
Right ´ Advance/run right (depending on mode).
Left ´ Advance left.
B button ´ mid-kick.
A button ´ mid-punch.
B button + up ´ high kick.
B button + down ´ low kick.
A button + up ´ high punch.
A button + down ´ low punch.

Magic items
Press start then press select to advance through all the available items. Press start then select to use the item.
Shuriken *Inflicts one high-kick worth of damage.*
Scroll *Rapid fighting. Simply hold down desired attack key combination for continuous hits.*
Magic Pot
Fills up energy.

Level 1
Select
Power ´ 2 Life ´ 4 Speed ´ 3
Guards
Mid-kick them four times in quick succession.
Guardian
Go into fighting mode as soon as you see him. As soon as he is in range mid-kick him once. He will retaliate and kick you back. Now keep mid-kicking him until he dies. Don't worry about your strength level. This will automatically be replenished when you defeat him.

Level 2
Select
Power ´ 4 Life ´ 5 Speed ´ 5
Guards
Four mid-kicks in rapid succession are enough to dispatch any guard. But timing kicks is now much harder.
Deadly gate
Advance until your right foot is almost at the righthand post of the gate, then mid-punch. The gate will now come crashing down. Stand up. The gate will rise slowly, when the gate is level with your head, run forward without stopping.
Guardian
Once again, go into fighting mode as soon as you see him. When he's close mid-kick him then walk backwards, kicking every now and again. He will block most of your kicks and try the occasional mid-kick. As soon as he does, mid-kick him. Repeat this until he's dead (this may take a while).

Level 3
Select
Power ´ 6
Life ´ 7
Speed ´ 5
Guard 1
Mid-kick him as fast as you can.
Guard 2
Same as the level one guardian.
Guard 3
Mid-kick him as fast as you can.
Guard 4
As level two guardian.
Guardian
Fire all of your shurikens at him then walk backwards into the previous screen. Wait while hitting as many of the birds as you can. The guardian will walk slowly into the room. Mid-punch him very quickly, you may need to use the Magic Pot to finally defeat him.

Klax
Amiga

From Wim Van Hoek in Holland. Start the game as normal on the first wave. Press **CAPS LOCK** and then **SPACE**. Whilst pressing **SPACE**, press **3** to skip a level or **4** to start level 100 (the last one).



£50
SOFTWARE VOUCHER!

Want to earn yourself some free games and TGM T-shirt? Well it's easy. Just send in your tips, maps and cheats and and you could win all the goodies. Send all your information to: Newsfield, Robin Candy's Tricks 'n' Cheats, TGM, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1JW.

Typhoon Thompson

Atari ST, Amiga

A great game this one, certainly one of the highlights of the Eighties. If the sprites are getting you down or you haven't got a clue what's going on, then have a look a these tips from Peter Vitese from London.



Get used to the hovercraft's altitude and movement. Pushing forward on the mouse coupled with thrust is best for reaching top speed while pulling back on the mouse together with thrust puts the craft in reverse and forces it into the air (handy for avoiding nasty flyers). Pulling the craft back allows you to fire further into the distance (sometimes helpful, sometimes a hindrance). It's best to stick to drifting around without the thrusters, it's easy to thrust into danger or accidentally dive under the water if you're not careful.

Shoot one island at a time and lure way the flyers that emerge from it. Once the sprites are loose in the water they can be devilishly quick at getting back to the island. The further away they are when you hit their flyer, the better your chances of getting them all. If one flyer gets back then the sprite counter resets and you'll have to start again.

Try not to let flyers get behind you, especially dangerous ones like the Zapper. If things get too much, dive underwater and lob freeze bombs from down below.

Don't go mad with the laser. One shot is enough to destroy a flyer and any further shots tend to hit the sea sprites. Even worse is a stray shot that hits other flyers throwing yet more sea sprites into the water. As the sea sprites are identical in looks, there's no way of knowing from which island they come and hence you can't go about stopping sprites from getting back to their islands.

Never forget how sickeningly intelligent the flyers are. The nastier breeds of flyers like the Zapper and Spitter will home in on the player if sea sprites are in the water. Bubblers will dish out more bubbles as you draw near.

Weapons

Laser cannon Absolutely essential for everything.

Scatter bombs Best used to get rid of any bubbles surrounding your target; also good for splitting up groups of flyers.

Sprite magnets Upon killing a flyer, throw a good few sprite magnets around; even if the sprites change they'll still hang around the magnets before they expire.

Freeze bombs If the Zapper, Whomper and their friends get too close, hit the freeze bomb to halt them. Firing at them while frozen has the same effect as a laser cannon.

The Missions

'Bring us the Dagger!' A dead easy level introducing you to each of the different flyers in turn. One sprite controls each flyer so collecting the seventh sprite, and thus the dagger, shouldn't be too difficult.

'Bring us the Hammer!' Again no major hassles but this time it's 14 sprites in total, with two flyers popping out of each island with one sprite in each at the controls. Make sure you're not caught between two kill-on-contact flyers and you should be okay. Kill any Zappers, Suckers or Forcers first.

'Bring us the Balloon!' The problems continue to double with 28 sprites to be picked up, two flyers from each island with two sprites in each. No real advance in difficulty over the Hammer level except that you've got twice as many sprites to pick out of the water.

'Bring us the Pacifier!' Your problems on this level come in the form of 42 sprites. Now there are three flyers per island with two sprites in each. From now on it's best to draw them away from the islands and hit them one at a time.

'Bring us the Baby!' The ultimate challenge as all hell breaks loose with three sprites for every one of the three flyers in each of the seven islands (63 sprite in all). There's little new about this level other than the increase in sprites. You now have to draw them even further away from their islands. Now just sit back and watch the neat animated sequence.

The Flyers

Bumper Normally little more than a nuisance, he just bashes you around for kicks. The only worry you've got with this one is that he could hit you into a Sucker, Zapper, Bubbler, or anything else which is a little more lethal. Luckily this is a rare event if you make sure that the flyers are spaced out when taking them on.

Whomper A dangerous fellow as he moves like the clappers and is difficult to pin down for long range shots. He's even worse when close up, as he homes in on you with frightening accuracy. Get him at long range and you've got no problems.

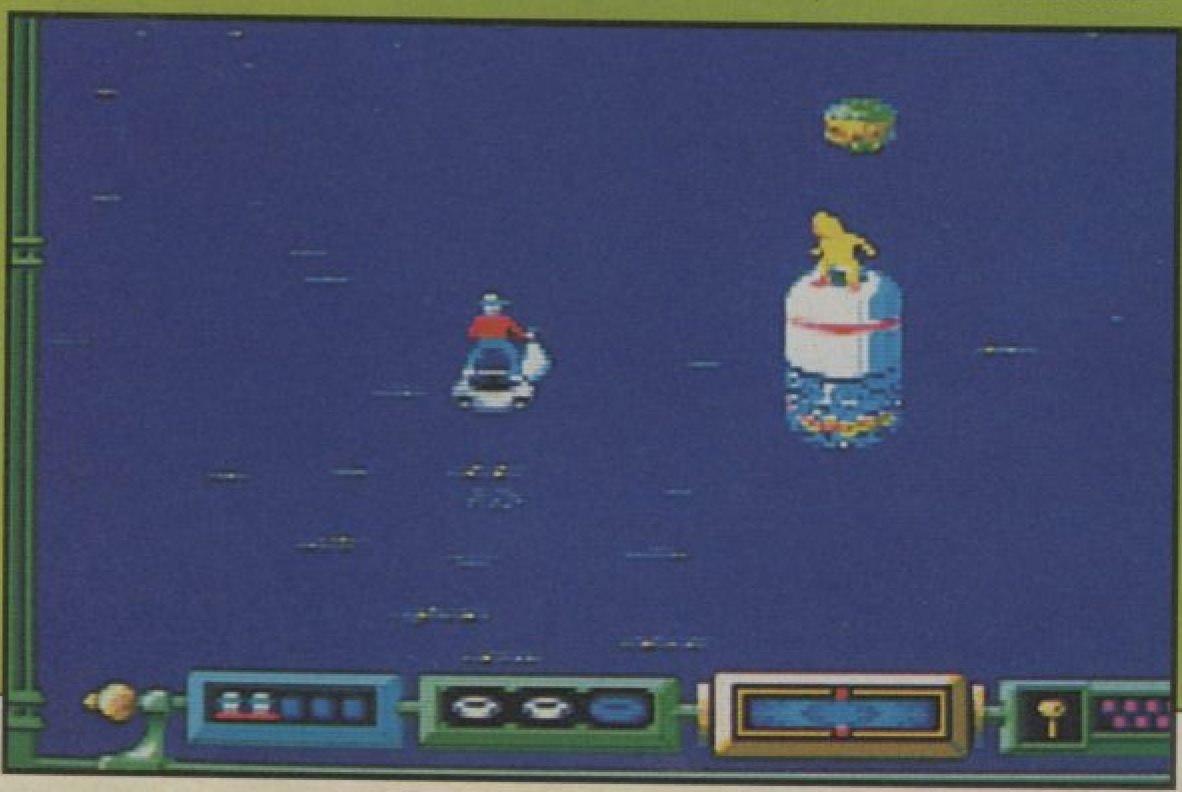
Forcer Get two of these together and you'll have some real fun desperately trying to hover in a straight line. Alternatively, hit him with a freeze bomb from below and fire a close range shot at him.

Sucker Obviously the opposite in effect to the Forcer. Fire from long range, and if he gets too close thrust away (never backwards), dive for cover, hit the scatter/freeze bombs, in fact — do anything! You have a few seconds to get away but that's all.

Bubbler This nasty piece of work can multiply your problems at the drop of a hat. Use the scatter bomb to clear the seaways of bubbles.

Spitter Like the Bubbler, long range flyers are the worst of them all, the spitter being no exception. Use the long range shot facility to pick them off. If they fire, thrust back immediately together with a slip to the left or right. Spitters fire at your last targeted position so a move away should remove you from harm's way.

Zapper One touch loses you both a life and a hovercraft and you most definitely need them later on. As he's low in the water you may miss him a few times. Launch a freeze bomb to stop him and fire a long range shot to finish him off. On no account let him get near!



COMICS A NEW GENERATION

There are more comics on the shelves nowadays than ever before. From the old fogies in Star Trek to a new generation in Total Recall. But no matter how many comics are released, you can bet you bottom dollar that our own Warren 'coffee and Marvel' Lapworth will be there to check 'em out. Here's his rundown of the most interesting recent releases

GOD LOVES, MAN KILLS
Marvel, £5.50

A time warp for those moody mutants, the X-Men, going back to their 1982 line-up of Cyclops, Wolverine, Nightcrawler, Storm, Ariel (now named Shadowcat and joining Nightcrawler in *Excalibur*), Colossus and Professor Xavier for a reprint of the *God Loves, Man Kills* saga. High-profile evangelist, the Reverend William Stryker carries his crusade beyond religion and God's teachings to hit out against mutants such as the X-Men, social misfits he sees as evil. He captures Cyclops, Storm and Xavier and connects the Prof to a machine that will amplify his telepathic powers and, corrupted by brainwashing techniques, destroy mutants all over the globe.

Then, as now, Chris Claremont is fond of tales that show the oppression his mutant minority face, a direct comparison with the racial prejudice of real life. By mixing social statement with fun superhero action, he avoids political overkill. Brent Anderson's good but sometimes vague art is helped considerably by Steve Oliff's tasteful, considered colouring and matches the gratifyingly thoughtful mainstream tale.



ORBIT
Eclipse Books, £3.50 (import)

It's becoming quite a trend to convert known fantasy/sci-fi authors' short stories into comic strip format and gathering them into limpback mini-anthologies. *Orbit* is the latest, its selling point being

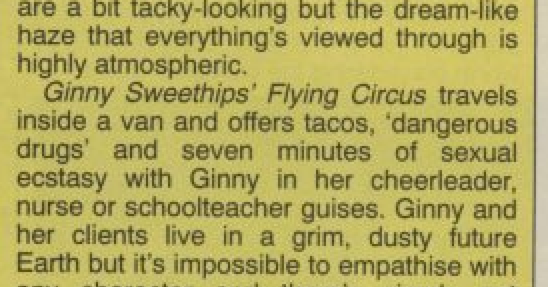


that each story featured was once published in *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*.

Indeed, each issue will lead with a story by Asimov himself, *Nothing For Nothing* opening the first *Orbit*. Diplomatic aliens are in orbit around Stone Age Earth and although most of them want to pass it by, the Explorer alien is fascinated by it and its inhabitants. What can the thuggish humans possibly offer the aliens? And what can the advanced extra terrestrials offer in return? Well the story doesn't come up with the goods, for a start off, but John Bolton's art is xcellent. Aliens are a bit tacky-looking but the dream-like haze that everything's viewed through is highly atmospheric.

Ginny Sweethips' Flying Circus travels inside a van and offers tacos, 'dangerous drugs' and seven minutes of sexual ecstasy with Ginny in her cheerleader, nurse or schoolteacher guises. Ginny and her clients live in a grim, dusty future Earth but it's impossible to empathise with any character and there's simply not enough story. This latter complaint can be levelled at *Fermi and Frost*, in which a doctor takes a boy to the safety of Iceland as a nuclear war begins. Both stories have high quality, richly coloured art but ultimately lack feeling.

TOTAL RECALL
DC, £1.60





Schwarzenegger's latest movie exploits are recreated in the *Total Recall* comic. Arnie plays Doug Quaid, who would like to get away from it all but can't afford to move to one of Earth's off-world colonies. Instead, he goes to Rekall to be given the memories of a secret agent's adventure. After a supposedly unsuccessful memory transfer, he's attacked by spies on the way home. This begins his mission against Cohaagen, the power-crazed administrator of the Mars colony, a task aided by Hauser, a man with identical looks but different memories to Quaid.

Throughout *Total Recall* you can never be sure if it's all happening to Quaid or if it's a Rekall memory or even just a dream. It's also possible that he didn't exist! This irritating puzzle is balanced out by plenty of gratuitous violence and fast action sequences. Well I'm sure that's what they are in the movie but, although visuals are generally adequate and Arnie looks like he should, pace and interest lulls during these moments. The film is receiving critical acclaim in the States but I doubt if this adaptation is.



V FOR VENDETTA
Titan Books, £9.95

From humble British beginnings to later DC issues, Titan Books now present Alan Moore's *V For Vendetta* series in a single volume. It's 1997 and Britain is controlled by a totalitarian Labour government, an iron grip headed by the Leader and monitored by the Fate computer. But there's a strange hero in the shadows, a man called V and dressed as Guy Fawkes, a pale grinning mask his visage. On November 5th, he appropriately blows up Parliament and rescues a despairing teenager, Evey, from the clutches of government detectives ('Fingermen'). Together they continue to strike against leading state officials, who seem powerless to stop V and are confounded as to his identity.

David Lloyd's artwork is near perfect for the scenario, areas of heavy, dark ink contrasting with the pale, distraught colours of an oppressive, demoralising world. Figures are grim and realistic, but none as enthralling as the sweeping cloak and bleached papier-mâché mask of V himself. Unfortunately, it's during a reader's encounters with him in the first part of the story (which is divided into three 'books') that *V For Vendetta* shines, later sections amusing and readable but too familiar — too *1984* — V not quite as fresh as he first appears. Still, it's impossible not to wonder who he is and exactly how far he'll go. If you didn't buy this as a monthly series it's well worth considering the collected works.



REVOLVER
Fleetway, £1.65

Fleetway have finally released their long-delayed, multi-strip 'adult' comic, *Revolver*. Its lead story is *Dare*, an alternative history of Daniel, Pilot of the Future, scripted by Grant Morrison (of *Arkham Asylum* fame). So little is said in the first nine page, picture-heavy episode that it's impossible to say where Morrison intends to take the character but the visual emphasis is a bad move. Rian Hughes's art is simple, antiquated and abstractly coloured, and Dan Dare looks like a cross between Bruce Forsyth and Morrissey.

Although form is a bit vague, the visuals for *Purple Days*, by *Floyd* Hughes, are the best in the whole comic magazine, colour used warmly and effectively. Amiable characters begin a story based on the life of Jimi Hendrix in an intriguing if casual manner.

Pinhead is a complete waste of two pages that should've been used developing *Happenstance and Kismet*. Written by Paul Neary, best known for his inking work with Alan Davis, the latter is set in a pub where boozing bigot Kismet meets posh horse racing enthusiast Happenstance, when the landlord accidentally discovers the deeds to the establishment. Art is suitably jocular for this cartoon farce which failed to raise even the slightest smirk from me.

A weary young man's visit to an Indian restaurant is punctuated by Rudyard Kipling's surreal, hallucigenic visit to blue-skinned Hindu *Rogan Gosh*. Brendan McCarthy's visuals are detailed and attractively coloured but I think Pete Milligan was under the influence of something when he wrote the strange yet tedious script.

Julie Hollings' *Dire Streets* is a useless attempt at sit-com humour, seven poorly written and illustrated pages, and while *Nine Inches to the Mile* looks great, text is a stream of useless, semi-philosophical waffle. Most of the seven strips in *Revolver go completely nowhere (like the barrel in a gun...), and those which don't take one step forward and struggle not to take any steps back. Hopefully it'll improve in time but as it stands Revolver is the perfect way to waste £1.65.*



STAR TREK ANNUAL
DC, £1.60

The telly series may be as old as the hills, and the actors even older, but DC have only just produced the first *Star Trek* annual. It's co-written by George Takei, who played Sulu in the series, and prevents the dilemma of the inhabitants of Datugad. This planet is the key supplier of a cheap yet efficient fuel called trimanium, but ever-improving mining techniques have had an undesirable effect on the population: physical contact between Datugadians causes them to spontaneously combust!

The crew of the Enterprise have been enlisted to help preserve the race by gathering the necessary samples to produce test tube Datugadians and eventually relocate them. A native politician, Shelm, objects to genetic engineering and he and his followers cause problems. Sulu has problems of his own with an old flame, who happens to be heading the medical project.

As could be expected in a story co-written by Takei (with Peter David), Sulu is the character who takes the spotlight in the annual. This makes a change from Kirk, Spock and Bones, but soon becomes tiresome; he never had sufficient depth of character to justify real attention. Visually, Sulu's handicapped by Gray Morrow's simplistic, scruffy art. A story almost as basic, and corny sentimentality go further to shoot it in the foot. Only staunch Trekkies need beam aboard.



THE KNIGHTS OF PENDRAGON
Marvel UK, 95p

Logically enough, Marvel UK's new mini-series, *The Knights of Pendragon*, features Captain Britain, the leader of Marvel *USA*'s newest and, in my opinion, best mutant team, Excalibur. In issue one, he takes a backseat to Alistaire and Dai of the Weird Happenings Organisation (WHO), who are investigating a series of strange deaths: a whale hunter has been shot with a 400-year-old harpoon, a controversial fruit grower was found vacuum packed and irradiated, and more recently 87 people died after eating at a fast-food joint. A sinister scarecrow somehow appears to be at the root of the deaths and meanwhile ruthless 'businessmen' are hindering WHO's progress.

The Knights of Pendragon takes a firm environmental stance, to the point of being printed on paper using half as many trees as 'normal' paper (?) and using minimal bleaching agents. Certainly this isn't to the publication's disadvantage, thick and glossy pages holding Gary Erskine and Andy Lanning's clear, pleasant art well. Characters are reminiscent of those drawn by the great Alan Davis, who's produced the covers for the series, but not quite as friendly.

Other than a contrived conversation between a farmer and his worker, Green issues aren't forced down your throat, more eased down with thoughtful cynicism. Thus far, the emphasis is on the mysterious and supernatural but I'm sure that superheroic action from Captain Britain will be brought to the fore in later issues. *The Knights of Pendragon* is a readable, intelligent way to prick the ecological conscience of the comic-reading public.

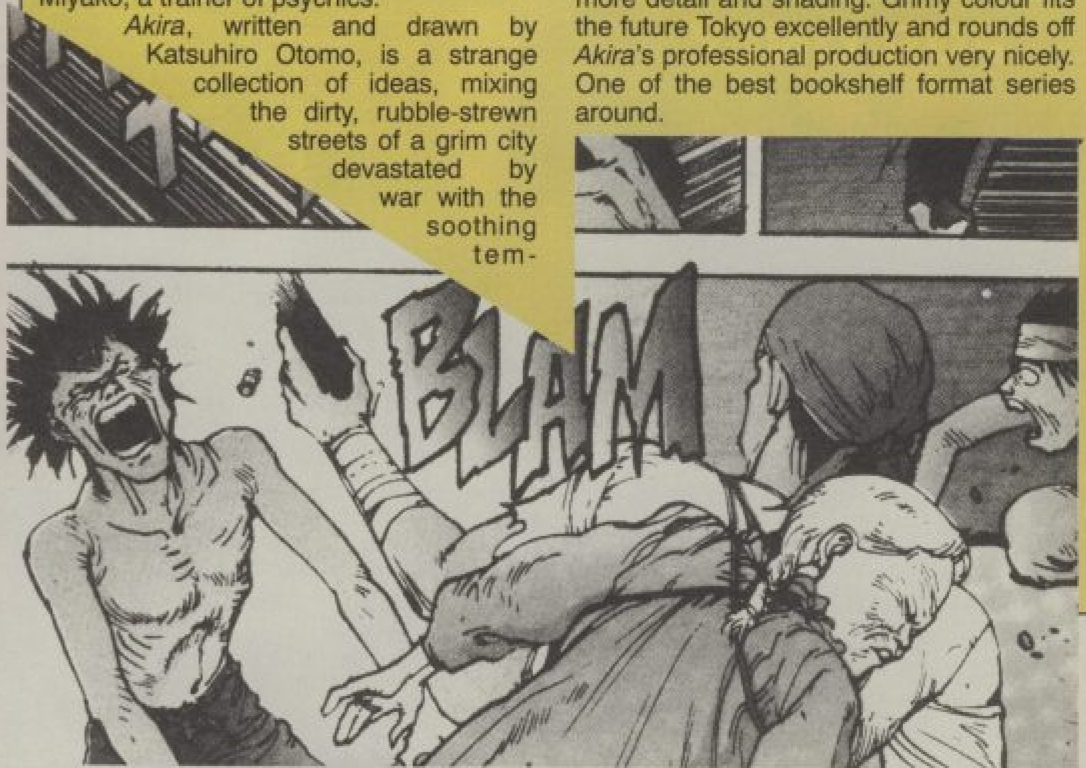


AKIRA
Epic, £2.50 (import)

Neo-Tokyo, 2030, a wasteland following a thermo-nuclear explosion which may still prove to be the strike which triggers World War IV. *Akira* is named after a telekinetic child of incalculable power and sets a group of young friends, part of an underground resistance movement, against the forces of the tyrannical Colonel. In issue 20, *Revelations*, Kay has a tough time getting the injured Masura to safety while Tetsuo confers with the mysterious Lady Miyako, a trainer of psychics.

Akira, written and drawn by Katsuhiro Otomo, is a strange collection of ideas, mixing the dirty, rubble-strewn streets of a grim city devastated by war with the soothing temples of ancient Japan. Characters fit this pattern also, the Colonel's savage thugs contrasting with the serene, meditative Lady Miyako. Indeed it's her philosophical words which are the focus of this issue, fast-paced action filling in the gaps.

Art is typically Japanese, full of characteristic disproportioned cute faces but with more detail and shading. Grimy colour fits the future Tokyo excellently and rounds off *Akira*'s professional production very nicely. One of the best bookshelf format series around.



ROBOCOP 2
Marvel UK, £3.50 (import)



Detroit's really in trouble now. OCP's unfair treatment of its police force has caused them to strike. The city owes OCP $37 million and has no hope of paying. OCP have foreclosed on all their contracts — Detroit has effectively become privatised to them. And a designer drug, nuke, threatens the city.

In *RoboCop 2*, Lewis and our cyborg friend are refusing to strike, but a raid on the nuke factory fails, and the leader of the ring, Cain, disassembles RoboCop. He's put back together but with an awkwardly comprehensive list of directives, including don't run through puddles, don't monopolise the bathroom, and don't walk across a ballroom floor swinging your arms (honest)! He clears his mind and goes up against Cain, his hoods and OCP's newest cyborg cop...

Adapted from the screenplay co-written by Frank Miller, one would expect *RoboCop 2* to be something special. Although far from brilliant, it's interesting and action-packed, if unsophisticated. Artwork is a bit weak, worst when RoboCop's familiar visage is distorted, but it has no scenes where graphic detail is needed. It's sure to be infinitely superior as a movie so unless you dislike surprises, leave the graphic novel until you've seen the real thing.

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Spent your hard-earned cash on the latest blockbusting arcade-quality game and still hungry for action? Or perhaps you're crippled by mortgage rates and the poll tax, and find the folding stuff hard to come by? Warren Lapworth picks out some great games you can acquire for little cash

Back at the beginning of the budget game story, the thought of a complete game for just £1.99 was an amazing concept. Firebird and Mastertronic were the only budget software houses then but their first games, all 8-bit (16-bit home computers didn't exist), were pretty tacky. Two quid was a lot of money for what was most use as a very short blank tape. Gradually, the overall quality improved and both pioneering budget houses released some real gems.

As more and more 8-bit budget labels appeared, most notably Code Masters, re-releases began to appear. A bit long in the tooth, maybe, but they were and still are *real* games for just a few pounds. Many original games are still produced but re-releases are becoming more and more frequent, and £2.99 is fast establishing itself as *the* budget price.

In the 16-bit world, budget software has developed less quickly and spectacularly. Mastertronic started well with *Sidewinder* but then things went quiet for a couple of years. 16 Blitz and Smash 16 were launched late last year, offering games at £4.99, but none have released products of quality; the only decent 16-bit budget games are £9.99 re-releases.

CAPTAIN BLOOD

Infogrames
■ *Amiga/Atari ST* ■ *£9.99*

I apologise in advance for the following surreal plot; I didn't write it.

Charles Darwin has told down-trodden programmer Bob Morlock that aliens are invading Earth through arcade machines. Bob coded a spaceship (ARK) and a digitised alter-ego (Captain Blood) but became trapped inside the program. Worse still, after hyperspacing to avoid hostile aliens, his body split into 30 clones, each taking an equal fraction of his body fluid.



As the game begins, 25 of the clones have already been found — just as well considering there are 32,768 planets in the game! A galactic map is used to select worlds to hyperspace to, then you weave through fractal canyons, avoiding homing missiles on the way, to hopefully find an alien. Using icons to speak, they'll hopefully give clues to the location of a clone. If you're of a suitably violent disposition, planets can be vaporised.

The graphics palette consists of blues and purples, the aliens, Captain Blood's ET-like arm and certain parts of the ship showing influence from HR Giger, the *Alien* designer. Vector graphics used in canyons are grainy but the sensation of movement's good. Title music's sampled from Jean-Michel Jarre and atmospheric samples are used for alien speech.

Captain Blood requires deft piloting skills to avoid the crags and outcrops of the canyons and fool the relentless missile warnings. Once an alien's found, communication's a question of creative and intelligent use of icons to form crude sentences. *Captain Blood*'s gameplay is a bit dated but at a tenner the interstellar detective work is worth tracking down.

Machine ratings:
ATARI ST 76% AMIGA 77%

GHOSTS 'N' GOBLINS

Encore ■ *C64/Spectrum* ■ *£2.99*

Elite have only just released 16-bit conversions of this classic Capcom coin-op but 8-bit versions have already had their second birth. Noble knight Arthur's girlfriend has been kidnapped by a dragon (original) and you must guide him through five horizontally scrolling levels. Many spooks 'n' monsters attack him but Arth has a limitless supply of lances at his disposal, replaceable by daggers, axes, fireballs, etc as he goes on his way. If damaged, Arthur loses his armour first, losing a life the next time he's hurt.

The Spectrum's graphics are detailed monochrome, the C64's blocky but colourful, but both have good animation and scrolling. C64 sound effects are great and music's simply brilliant, sophisticated voices used in a fun, energetic piece.

While both are top-notch, C64 *Ghosts 'n' Goblins* is especially good, one of the most playable and addictive coin-op conversions ever. Difficulty level is a little irregular, the game suddenly becoming noticeably tougher halfway through level two, but it's such a jolly jaunt that you can't resist having 'just one more go'.

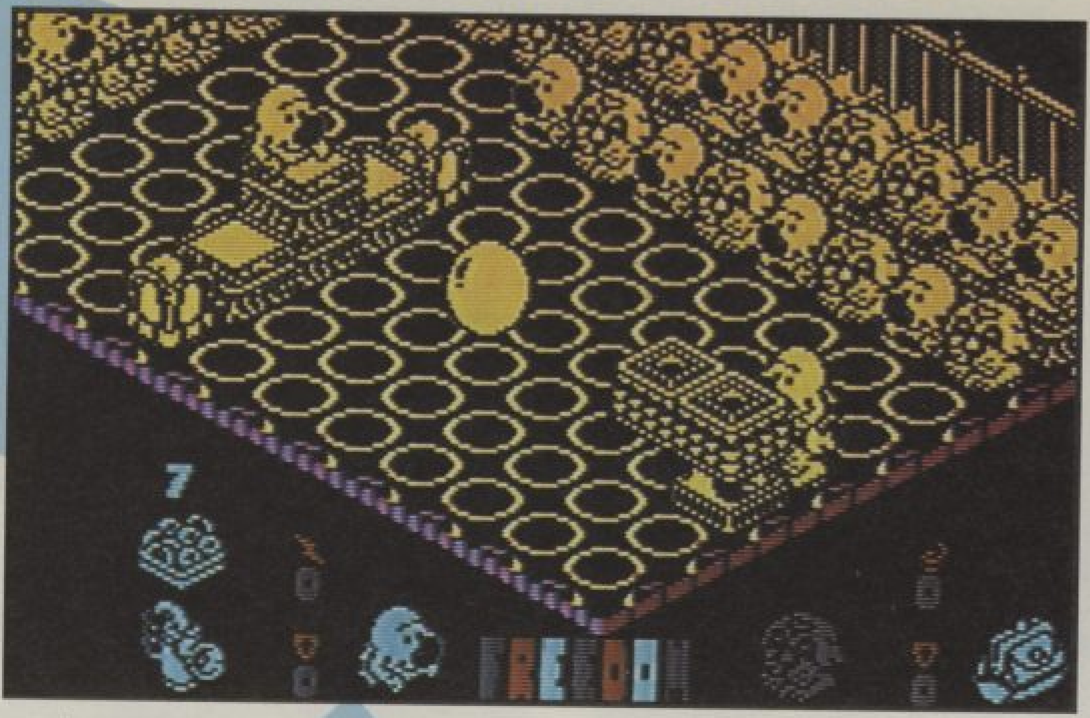
Machine ratings:
C64 95% SPECTRUM 85%



HEAD OVER HEELS

Hit Squad

■ *Spectrum/C64/Amstrad* ■ *£2.99*



Head Over Heels is one of those isometric games so characteristic of the Spectrum, this one unusual in that you control two different creatures. Head and Heels are spies from the planet Freedom and have been slammed into different cells on the evil Blacktooth Empire's prison world. The Empire holds tyrannical power of several planets but they can be liberated by the removal of Blacktooth crowns. Head and Heels have made it their job to steal the crowns.

Head can jump high and, with the right equipment, fire deadly doughnuts, but moves slowly, while the swift Heels is bad at jumping but can carry a bag for storing items. Patrolling robots endanger their lives and object-oriented puzzles and dexterity tests impede progress.

The *Knight Lore* style graphics are highly detailed and sprites have great character. Spectrum and C64 versions are almost completely monochrome but the Amstrad has extra spots of colour. For such a game, speed on the slothful C64 is excellent.

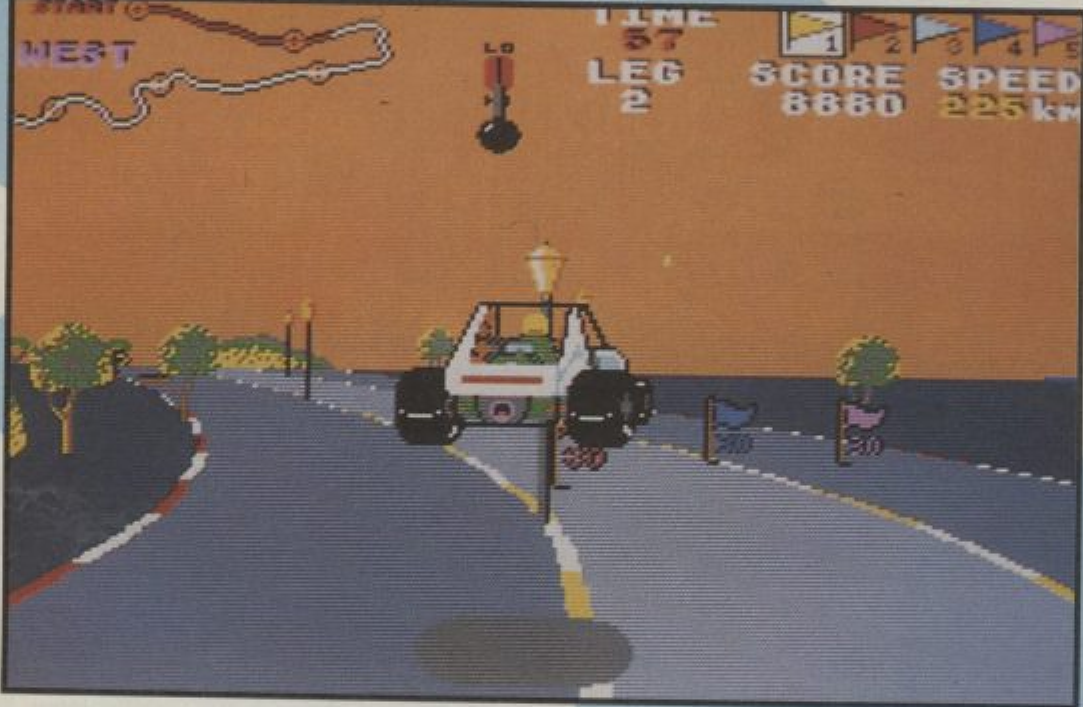
Head Over Heels takes a lot of getting into and plenty of mapping. After much practice you'll be able to reunite the two leading sprites, by which time you'll be well and truly hooked. Puzzles become highly devious and it's brilliant the way Head and Heels can be used both as individuals and as a team. Arcade skills, brainpower and cartography are needed for this definitive isometric game.

Machine ratings:
SPECTRUM 97% C64 97%
AMSTRAD 97%

BUGGY BOY

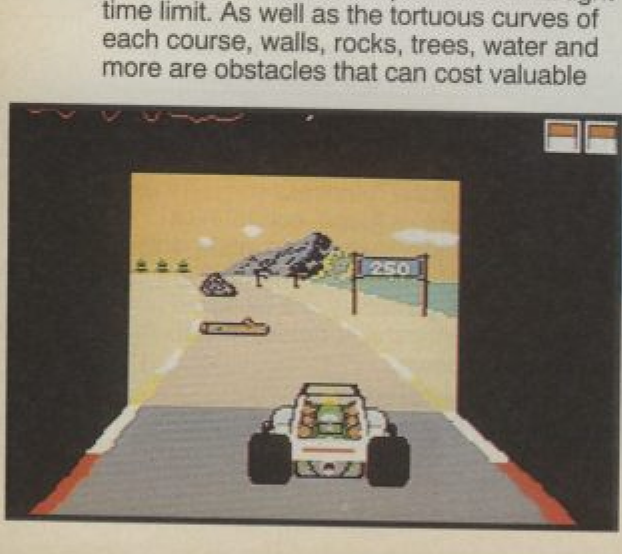
Encore ■ *Amiga/Atari ST* ■ *£9.99*

Tatsumi's most famous coin-op is a rough race in a robust Baja Bug. The five selectable courses — Offroad, North, South, East and West — are each divided into five



stages that must be completed within a tight time limit. As well as the tortuous curves of each course, walls, rocks, trees, water and more are obstacles that can cost valuable time. Steering into flags and through gates earns bonus points.

Graphics and sound are both pretty close to the original (the ST not quite so accurate on the audio side), not vastly difficult as *Buggy Boy* is one of the older coin-op racers. Background/obstacle graphics are short on detail but road perspective is accurate and fast, and the buggy sprite's very good.



Although there aren't any opposing vehicles, there's still plenty to do in *Buggy Boy*. Dodging obstacles and negotiating curves is enough to fill the stages, often more than enough, then there are flags and point gates to divert you from your path. Interaction with obstacles is useful, logs to make the buggy jump, a tree stump or stone to make it run on two side wheels — useful to get through narrow gaps in walls/barriers — and there's the infamous football to hit for bonus points. In short, the best budget racer available.

Machine ratings:
AMIGA 89% ATARI ST 88%

LEADERBOARD

Kixx ■ *Amiga* ■ *£9.99*

Tackling any of four courses, the holes are shown in 3-D perspective from above and behind the golfer sprite. Shots are aimed with a cursor and played using the power/snap indicator, a split bar that sets power (surprising) and hook or slice,



depending upon where its movement's stopped.

There's not much detail in the graphics but perspective's spot on and scenery's rapidly drawn. The golfer sprite's good with superb animation and ball movement's realistic. Sounds are atmospheric thwacks and clunks.

Leaderboard came as quite a surprise when it was originally released in mid-'86, for the C64: the Carvers were previously known for the mindless Commie-bashing violence of *Raid Over Moscow and Beach Head I* and *II*. It's just as well the brothers switched from war to sport as *Leaderboard* (and to a lesser degree *Tenth Frame*, the bowling game which followed it) has surprisingly high playability and is a game that the software industry would be worse without. Most, if not all, golf games that have followed it have used a close derivative of the Carvers' power/snap indicator, which has been adapted for other types of game. On your own, honing your rounds to better and better scores is an absorbing pastime and competing against friends is even more amusing. One of the best sports games ever and a snip at this price.

Machine rating: 92%





BIONIC COMMANDO

Kixx ■ C64 ■ £2.99

Zargon missiles are not pleasant devices. If not for them, your home planet would still be independent, and not part of the Enemy's territory. But you are one of the new commandos, fitted with state-of-the-art weaponry, and are going back home to cripple the Enemy's forces — including deactivating the Zargon missiles.

The bionic commando runs through five multi-directional scrolling levels armed with a rifle which may be exchanged for more powerful weaponry, carried by weapons parachutes. Most important, however, is the commando's robotic arm. It extends to approximately three times the commando's height and has a strong claw on the end, which can grip many surfaces, allowing the commando to swing and climb with the arm. It can also be used to stun the many soldiers, guerillas, bipedal vehicles and more that get in his way.

The commando sprite is disappointing, a vague, blocky collection of pixels. However, his animation's good and the movement of the extendable bionic arm and resulting swinging motion is excellent. Other sprites are better defined but move equally well. Backgrounds are repetitive within each level but are bold, colourful and scroll smoothly. Music's superb, a piece per level plus a metallic, percussive title tune, all using high-quality sounds and brilliantly composed; some of the best C64 music ever heard.

Ignore the horrendous 16-bit conversions (you call that *scrolling?*), *Bionic Commando* is one of the best coin-op conversions ever to grace the 64. That's not too great a surprise considering it was done by Software Creations, who programmed the highly accurate *Bubble Bobble* conversion. Graphics aren't anything to write home about but it's remarkable fun to run, shoot and swing through levels — the bionic arm is easy to master yet constantly stimulating to use. Once level one's mastered and level two's end is in sight, *Bionic Commando* has you hooked, addicted even. If you want an arcade conversion for your Commodore, it's an extremely tough choice between this and *Ghosts 'n' Goblins*.

Machine rating: 96%

FANTASY WORLD DIZZY

Code Masters ■ Spectrum ■ £2.99



Other than using the word 'simulator' as much as possible, those darling Code Masters have made a hero of a little wiggling egg called Dizzy. In this, his third game, his girlfriend's been kidnapped by a dragon (no, I'm not accidentally re-reviewing *Ghosts 'n' Goblins*) and is being held in a cloud castle in the heart of Fantasy World. Dizzy runs and jumps through flick screens, avoiding dangerous creatures and surfaces, and collecting coins and objects.

Background graphics are bright and detailed but there's colour clash. Sprites are cute and characterful but Dizzy himself is just *too* nice. Audio highlight is the digitised intro speech.

In a way, I think it's a shame that Dizzy games are popular (*Fantasy World* is his third adventure), because that stupid egg is a naff sprite. But you can't knock the quality of his games. His latest arcade adventure can be completed in two ways, either just collect all the gold coins you can find or use objects you find to solve puzzles. Either way you play, difficulty level is set just right so you progress that little bit further each time, ensuring you try again. Playable and mappable, *Fantasy World*'s the best Dizzy game yet.

Machine rating: 89%



BEAT BOX CORNER

MICRORHYTHM+

Firebird ■ C64 ■ £1.99

This is the sequel to plain old *Microrhythm*, a single-channel sampled drum 'machine' program that held the sounds of an acoustic kit. + has four individually loaded kits, Microdisco (fairly standard kit but with some big electro sounds), Microvocal (various unusual brief human utterances), Microtuned (synthbass sounds plus funky drums) and Microlatin (exotic percussion for that South American feel). Easily entered into patterns of between one and 16 beats using the second line of the keyboard, the 100 patterns can be linked forming up to four different songs. Patterns and songs can be saved out for later use.

With realistic, high-quality sounds and easy programming of drum patterns, *Microrhythm* was a bargain at two quid. The same price but four times the amount of samples, *Microrhythm+* is a must-buy, enabling the amateur musician to compose many and varied beats for nominal outlay. A bit difficult to find these days but well worth tracking down.

Machine rating: 91%

DRUM STUDIO

Smash 16 ■ Amiga ■ £4.99

A fairly recent attempt at producing an Amiga version of *Microrhythm*, *Drum Studio* has two adequate but similar-sounding drum kits, each sample's volume individually adjustable. Programming capacity and facilities are greater but the 16-bit samples are a lot noisier than *Microrhythm*'s 8-bit ones. A great opportunity missed by Smash 16.

Machine rating: 63%

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MILION £ STOCK CLEARANCE

OUR MAN IN Japan

Games, games, games. Doncha just love 'em. Shintaro Kanaoya returns with news of the latest PC Engine and Game Boy releases in happ'nin' Japan.



As predicted last month, PC Engine *Super Star Soldier* from Hudson Soft has revealed itself as a more violent rehash of their other successful shoot-'em-up *GunHed*. The game contains eight levels, all with different landscapes and guardians. You play Star Brain, at the helm of the Star Soldier Mk II. The new ship comes complete with lasers and an assortment of bullets firing in all directions. Travel, for example, through space and over a military establishment surrounded by water, your aim to basically blast all around you, picking up power-ups along the way. Essentially there are four types of weapons: multi-shot, ring laser, split laser and swing fire. Each has five strength levels, with extra multi-shot capabilities.

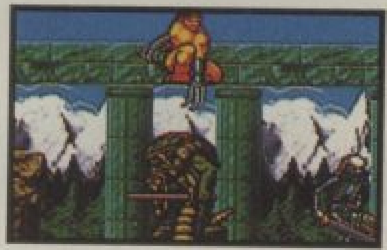


Now here's something you didn't know. To increase interest in their games every year, Hudson Soft travel around Japan in a big sales caravan trying to promote their latest big release. The whole shebang contains competitions, freebies and loads of family entertainment. Their chosen game to hype this year is *Super Star Soldier*, so watch out, kids!

Urusei Yatcura appears on CD-ROM at end of June. It's based on a popular Japanese comic strip, which has already turned into a TV cartoon and a full-length animated feature film. I believe the comic is also available in English (translated by Viz Comics — not that Viz) under the title Lam.

Lam is the name of one of the female characters in the comic, and she is not just another ordinary Japanese schoolgirl. She may have girlie hair and girlie big eyes, but she also has a strange pair of small horns. Thus is the flavour of *Urusei Yatcura*.

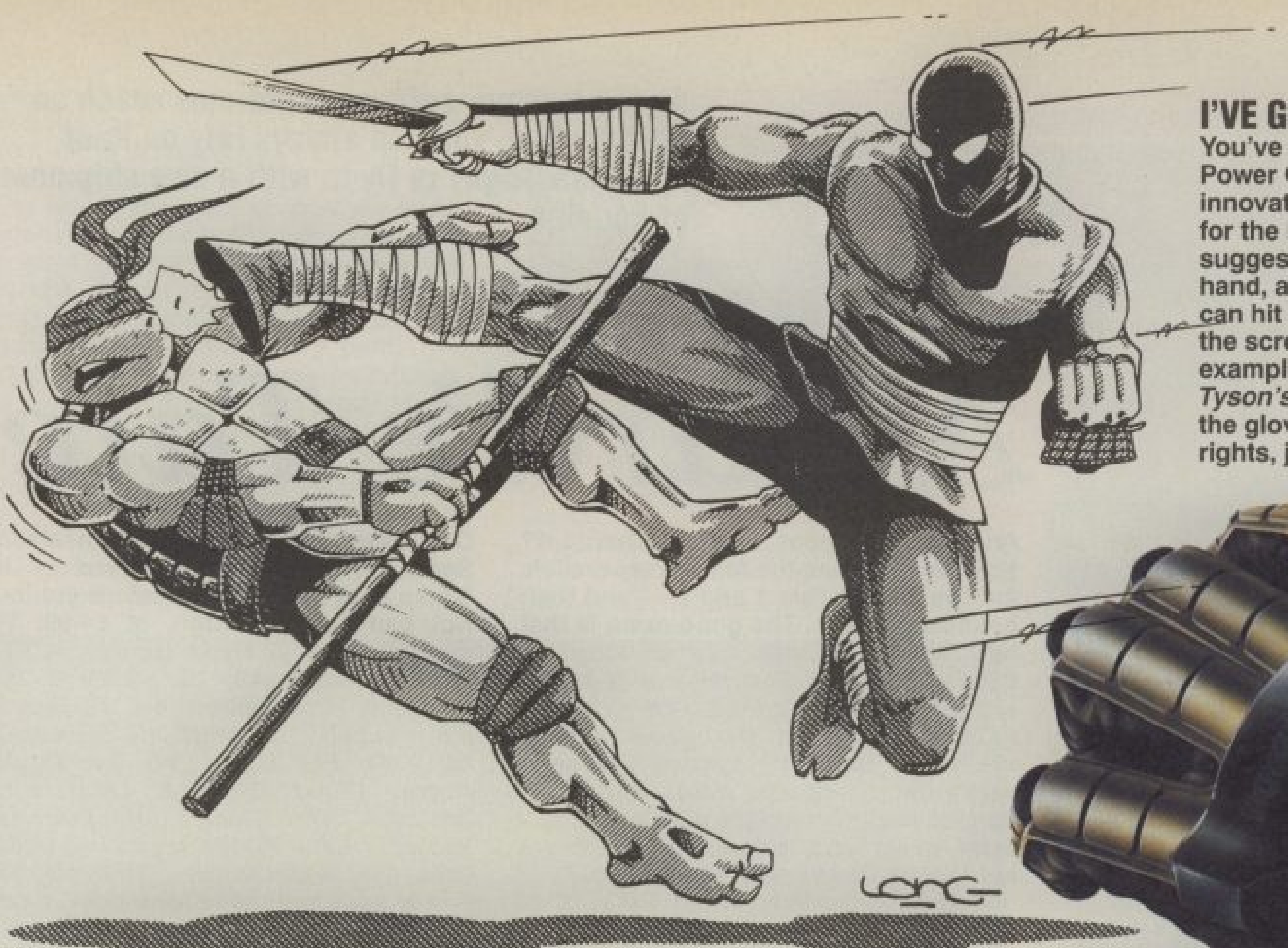
The game is an adventure resembling the cartoon and contains the actual voices of the TV people who work on the cartoon. The main character is a boy called Ataru. Of the control characters, four are girls, five are boys, and one is a priest with an orange head the size of the Mekon's (*weird*). The game also features crystal balls, men in suits and dark glasses, robot footprints, octopi, helicopter gunships and a girl in a leopard skin bikini. Sounds interesting, but the game's all in Japanese, so you may have a bit of difficulty getting into it.



Beat-'em-up sequel fans will be overjoyed to receive information appertaining to *Rastan Saga II*. Gingin returns to battle against flying bears, eight-foot cobras with swords, strange goat skulls, etc. Weapons can be chosen from a sword and shield, a long sword or claws. Items that can be collected along the way include balls of fire, laser bolts, walls of fire, extra protection, lives and healing potions.

Well, we've had a shoot-'em-up, a beat-'em-up and a game in Japanese that no-one can understand, all we need now's a sports game. And perfectly timed to follow the World Cup season is *World Beach Volley*.

Without being picky, it does seem a bit strange that the game takes place on a green surface, looking not too dissimilar to grass. I mean, this is supposed to be beach volleyball, isn't it? Perhaps they've created some new strain of green sand. To be fair, there are some courts on sand, some on earth even, but the majority are on grass. More ironically, the game's



from Information Global Service (IGS). You'd have thought they'd be accurate.

The game features two two-man/woman teams, and contains all the basic moves: attacking, blocking, receiving, serving etc. At the beginning of each game you can allocate certain points to specific attributes like power, skills, stamina, etc. And with a joypad adaptor up to four people can play at a time! Released at the end of July.

Lode Runner: Lost Labyrinth finally makes it to the PC Engine. It's a classic C64 game which came out in the UK about five years ago. The game basically involves a small sprite running up and down ladders collecting gold. Baddies can be ingeniously killed by creating holes in the floor for them to fall down. Worth buying if you haven't got it.

Finally on the Engine this month, I've news on four upcoming games. *Bastille*, released in October, is a CD-ROM wargame with quite outstanding graphics, and music written and performed especially for the game by a Japanese jazz band. *Klax* you know all about (to be released on all formats by Tengen/Domark), and it looks good. Similarly with the CD-ROM Cinemaware games, *It Came from the Desert* (which should be the best game ever, by all accounts!) and *TV Sports Football*.



I'VE GOT THE POWER

You've probably heard of the Power Glove. It's an innovative controller device for the Nintendo. As the name suggests, you wear it on your hand, and by moving it you can hit and pick-up things on the screen. The most famous example of this is *Mike Tyson's Punch Out*. You wear the glove, and throw lefts and rights, jabs and upper cuts, and the onscreen character does the same. The news



is that a new version is to be launched in Japan this summer — just imagine the fun you could have with *Strip Mah Yong*.

As the Game Boy drives off attacks from other would-be hand-helds, the games for it just keep coming. There's *Red Alima*, an arcade adventure; countless puzzle games; *Loch 'n' Chase*, a cute *Pac-Man*esque puzzle game; *Pipe Dream*, the US version of *Pipe Mania*; *Puzzle Lord*, a jigsaw game, and so on. But there are also quite a few action games: *F-1 Race*, *Boxing*, *Batman* and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* to name a few. It may only have a green screen, the batteries may run out in a week, and lines may start disappearing off the sides, but it's still fighting a good fight.

Anyway, it's an arrivederci from me and a sayonara to England's chances in the World Cup...

(Hah! Don't see any Jap teams there, mate! — Ed.)

As the summer software doldrums reach an all-time low, you can always rely on Paul 'Catalina' Rigby to fly in with a new shipment of goodies

A Bard's Tale

The ADVENTURE STRATEGY ROLEPLAY Column

Anyone remember Michael Cranford? No? Well, he was the fellow responsible for *The Bard's Tale 1* and *2* — and then he disappeared... The good news is that he's alive and well and working for Brøderbund. His first release is a science-fiction RPG called *The Centauri Alliance*. Although the game initially resembles *Bard*, the system has been vastly improved, with a 3-D, hex-based combat routine, multiple missions, character skills and automapping. I'll get hold of the C64 version soon.

Also from Brøderbund, an RPG called ***The Dark Heart of Uukrul*. You control four warriors out to vanquish the evil Uukrul by finding his heart which is kept in the depths of a mountain city. First perspective travelling, look-down combat, automapping and non-player character (NPC) close-up graphics are featured. A review of the PC version is on the way.**

News has reached me that the well-received ***Star Saga* series (I reviewed the first two ages ago) has been snapped up by Cinemaware in the States. Does this mean that their buddies Mirrorsoft might distribute them in the UK?**

Look out for a new SF RPG designed by Paragon — based upon the tabletop RPG created by Games Designer's Workshop in the States. Called ***Mega Traveller 1 — The Zhodani Conspiracy*, it features one of the most complex character generation routines ever seen (70 talents/abilities and 30+ skills). With a top-down view of the 28 planets, space battles, close-up NPC portraits and multi-character parties, *Mega Traveller* looks promising.**

Onto the homegrown scene, it appears that the Zenobi empire is going from strength to strength. I'll be looking at one or two of their latest releases very soon. However, Zenobi supremo John 'Genghis' Wilson has kindly informed me of several older adventures that are now under his wing. ***The Adventurer* (S&D Gray) and *Whiplash & Wagonwheel* (Ulterior Motives) are both excellent adventures for the ST, priced at £5.99 each. *The Adventurer* even comes with a free blank disk. *Two For One* is an adventure double bill for the ST containing *The Challenge* and *The Thief*. Both are ex-Spectrum adventures re-jigged for the ST, so bear this in mind before you buy. Not bad value, though, at £4.99. The superb *Jekyll & Hyde* (Spectrum 48K, £2.99; 128K, £3.49; +3, £3.99) is also available. Finally, check out the *Best of the Indies* compilation (Spectrum 48/128K). For £3.99 you get *Double Agent*, *Cloud 99*, *The Labours of Hercules*, *The Domes of Sha*, *The Secret of Little Hodcome*, and *Retarded Creatures and Caverns*. This compilation is excellent value for money, I can't recommend it highly enough. Contact** Zenobi Software, 26 Spotland Tops, Cutgate, Rochdale, Lancashire OL12 7NX.

With a final comment to say that Sierra's ***Hero's Quest 1* and *King's Quest IV* are now out for the 1 Mb Amiga, I've just got enough space to say goodb...**

PAUL RIGBY, TGM, NEWSFIELD, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1JW.

PC £24.99

CENTURION

Electronic Arts

The basic premise of *Centurion* is that you play an ambitious officer out to defend Rome and its fledgling Empire. Your ambition is to become Caesar and rule the world — notice how these young officers never settle for a wife, mortgage and 2.2 children?

The tactical and strategic problems of actually conquering the opposition are fairly entertaining. After moving your legion icon onto a foreign country (invading) a diplomacy option becomes available, giving the opposition the chance to capitulate or ally. I never achieved anything with this (even on the easiest level). I was always defiantly challenged — even by the smallest and weakest nations.

The tactical land combat is a semi-automatic affair. You give orders for a formation and a tactic then you sit back and hope. The 3-D screen battle is a well presented and animated sequence. The formations (wedge etc) are well portrayed while the flow of battle keeps you on the edge of your seat. Morale rightly plays a big part. The seriousness of this area is undermined by the lack of consistency. While your military rank rises, the level of control you have on your men does not. In reality, the higher the rank, the less direct control you should have.

The other area of tactical combat is during the fleet combat. You control one of the two ships shown in top-down view. Damage being inflicted via missiles (arrows etc) and ramming. This section was unsatisfying as the ships had too little room to

manoeuvre. In addition, only one ship of either side is shown, even if you command a fleet of 12 or more. No tactics can be utilised, therefore.

The area of the game which really disappointed me was the action sequences. In a desperate attempt to turn the game into *Defender of the Crown* you have the chance to play a top-down chariot race and a gladiator beat-'em-up. Very pretty, but pointless. They are supposed to increase your popularity and rake in cash at the same time. Firstly, I would have thought that creating the largest empire the world has ever seen would rather overshadow a measly chariot race in the popularity stakes. As for the loot? How come your earnings from a day at the races compare with the loot accumulated from conquering the whole of Greece?!? Rather unbalanced, don't you think?

As it is, *Centurion* is a mish-mash of game styles that will satisfy no-one.

STRATEGY 48%

PC £24.99

EARTHRISE

Interstel

Solus is a mining colony. Contact has been lost. Okay, you might say, it happens all the time. Trouble is, this particular colony sits on a mechanically propelled asteroid which just happens to be on a collision course with Earth. While the rest of Earth jump up and down in panic, you must do a King Canute by stopping millions of tons of asteroids with your bare hands.

Earthrise is Interstel's first foray into the realms of animated adventures. It is a large game: 2.2Mb over six disks. Function keys have been adopted for oft used commands and can be used in conjunction with some definable keys.

The parser is okay (an adequate two-word type) and while the graphics are fairly good, they are not up to the quality of the more recent Sierra games. However, despite its dated appearance, *Earthrise* is quite enjoyable. I look forward to further, improved, games of this type from Interstel. The basics are there, but more polish is needed.

ADVENTURE 74%



BOOK REVIEW

Book review £7.95

COMPUTER ADVENTURES THE SECRET ART

Author: Gil Williamson. Available via normal outlets or through mail order from Amazon Systems, Merlewood, Lodge Hill Road, Farnham, Surrey GU10 3RD (£1.50 P+P). Tel: (0252) 716669.

Gil Williamson has produced a book on adventuring, the like of which has been missing from the shelves of the homebrew adventure author for too long. Gil gets down to the nitty gritty of just what constitutes an adventure: what is required, what are the ingredients to a successful adventure, how to integrate the design elements, etc.

The 128 pages are divided up into 11 chapters with a number of appendices. The contents cover the eternal question, how do you want to present your game? Text or graphics?

The book discusses how you go about obtaining ideas, and covers plot elements like puzzles, weapons, riddles, mazes and so on. Gil gives good advice on basic graphic design (perspective, composition, etc) as well as making the adventure more atmospheric by including incidental messages, even if they have no bearing on the actual solution.

The style of images, text and sound is debated after which various game systems are compared. A chapter on how to publish your game talks about copy protection (without the expense), publishing your own work, going to an outside publisher and utilising cheat protection. After a more detailed look at the components that form an adventure game, Gil gives a sample transcript of one of his own adventures, produced with an American shareware adventure creation utility called AGT (Adventure Game Toolkit), reviewed elsewhere this issue.

The appendices include lots of useful reference material, such as a list of utilities and a bibliography. There's a handy index at the back, too.

The Secret Art is a compact book packed with valuable advice which will be of interest to the adventure player but absolutely priceless to the adventure author. Readable, humorous and excellent value for money — I picked this book up and couldn't put it down till I'd finished.

BOOK REVIEW

ST, Amiga £19.99

RORKE'S DRIFT

Impressions

Impressions ask you to replay the epic defence of Rorke's Drift supply depot on 22 January, 1879, when 137 British soldiers (some of them hospitalised) fought off 4,000 Zulus.

The game is played on a squad level. You can observe the plan of the depot and its surrounding areas (this is just a basic map, not an alternative viewpoint), check on casualties and observe the health, ammo, defence strength and marksmanship.

Rorke's Drift is a failure, for a number of reasons. Firstly, the manual is very poor. Some of the commands are not explained and others do not tally with the screen. There is no discussion of tactics. One of the most successful infantry tactics used from Napoleonic times was the advancing line. Where one line of around ten men fires a volley, while a second line kneeling in front is, in the meantime, reloading. There was no mention of this or other tactics, the background info is very shallow too.

I would have liked to have seen some form of 'rubber window' (similar to Amiga and GEM commands) macro command where I could order a block of men to do the same thing (ie: move east). Unfortunately, I had to give each man his own order for every turn — all 137 of them!

There is no option for scrolling during the order phase, only during the battle phase. Even this proved to be very slow on both Amiga and ST. Finally, with the game being in 3-D, the viewpoint was sometimes restrictive. This hampered judgments in distance as well as during tactical manoeuvres.

Rorke's Drift may look nice, but there are too many design flaws for it to be recommended.

STRATEGY 34%

PC £24.99

CIRCUIT'S EDGE

Infocom

Based upon the cyberpunk novels of George Alec Effinger, *Circuit's Edge* has you as Marid Audran, a PI living in an Islamic ghetto known as the Budayeen, who is probably just as much a criminal as those people he is hired to chase. His latest case is to search for the missing notebook of a local Godfather. This leads Marid to unveil various murders and reveal a large, power struggle plot.

The game uses windows and menus during play. The three main windows show a first-person perspective view on your surroundings, any characters you are chatting to and a text window conveying messages, speech, etc. Stats (stamina, food, etc) are listed on the right. The menus allow you to look (to the left and right of a central view — a sort of peripheral vision effect), talk, inventory, do an action and look at the auto mapping routine. One of the unique actions is to plug a chip (called moddies and daddies) into yourself. These can give you extra abilities and can change your whole personality if need be.

The talk menu gives you a list of questions and comments so that you can interact, this menu changes after each round of interaction. Fighting is done in real-time. You select an action and weapon from a menu. I disliked this area because while I was selecting my action from the menu I was often pummelled in the meantime. (There should be a pause function while you make your selection.)

The game does address the thorny questions of sex and drugs. However, the former is toned down giving no offence to anyone while the latter tends to concentrate on the negative effects of drugs.

On the PC, Adlib and Roland sound cards are supported. While the Adlib gives some good sounds I must give a special mention to the Roland. Wow! The moody bass sounds with a sprinkling of reverb really add to the atmosphere, giving it a 'down and dirty' feel. In fact I was killed twice while enjoying the simple but haunting musical effects!

Not a classic by any means, but *Circuit's Edge* offers enough challenge and intrigue to be recommended to all RPG players interested in the cyberpunk theme.

RPG 80%

PC, ST £4.00(!)

ADVENTURE GAME TOOLKIT

Available from Amazon/Softworks, Merlewood, Lodge Hill Road, Farnham, Surrey GU10 3RD.

Having evolved from the simpler GAGS system, the *Adventure Game Toolkit* is an excellent shareware, adventure creation utility that produces finished adventures that look and play remarkably like Infocom text adventures.

Designed by David Malmberg, the PC version I reviewed comes with 11 (count 'em) nifty sample adventures! All of which can be examined to aid you in the design of your own creation.

AGT is, without doubt, the simplest yet most technically advanced adventure utility I have ever seen. The finished game can be produced in two levels. The Standard Level is the easiest to as it requires no programming knowledge, but still produces a finished product which looks impressive. The Professional Level adds a series of programming commands known as Meta-Commands. Again, though, they are easy to learn because they are totally structured and they use English language commands. For example you use the 'IsCarryingSomething' command to check whether a character is carrying an object and 'IsUnlocked' to check whether something is unlocked — simple!

The parser is advanced. As well as recognising the ALL command, you can use complex commands with AND, THEN and punctuation. Type 'THROW ROCK AT THIEF' and then say 'ATTACK HIM' and the parser will know you mean the thief. IT is recognised; you can LOOK IN, UNDER, BEHIND, etc, things. You can use the cursor keys as directional commands, ASK, TELL, TALK to people, assign commands to function keys, list exits, and there are AGAIN, BRIEF, VERBOSE, SCRIPT/UNSCRIPT commands — I could go on for ever!

The four document files give an enormous amount of help. They include a couple of very handy macro utilities which ease your adventure creating even more!

AGT was created using Turbo Pascal 4, which may explain its structured approach. Registered users, can have the whole 10,000 lines of source code used to create *AGT*. So you can alter, modify and add to the system! No excuse for 'adventure utility clones' now is there?

The only thing missing from *AGT* is a graphic utility, or hooks to port over files from recognised graphic programs. This is no big deal to my mind as this system can produce top-class adventures without the use of graphics. However, the development of *AGT* is very dynamic. New additions and versions are always in the pipeline (a version 2.0 of *AGT* and a pop-up programming menu utility are already on the way), so the prospects of a graphic utility/hooks appearing are good.

AGT is probably the bargain of the year. No offence to shareware intended. Apparently, Softworks produced *AGT* for Electronic Arts to market as a top-flight adventure utility. However, the deal fell through so Softworks decided to go public. Thank your wallet that they did!

UTILITY 88%

ST

IMPERIUM

Electronic Arts

One word springs to mind when I think of EA's new space strategy game, *Imperium*: class. This game has style, elegance and panache — and lots of it.

The object of the game is to create an empire. You have just been elected as Earth's leader and must reach out into the cosmos to build an empire of epic proportions. There are two ways to win at this game. Either live for 1000 years or crush your enemy's empires.

You may be aware of other games which demand a similar conclusion. However, I have never seen a strategy game with so many interconnected factors, depth or such lasting playability as *Imperium* offers.

The game interface is smooth and slick. A total WIMP, in fact! Icon commands are positioned along the top of the screen. Once accessed they produce a window which can be moved, closed or partially closed to leave just the title bar. The latter gives the convenience of instant access along with a tidy screen. Windows are full of buttons, sliders and so on.

The game's many subtleties and features prevent me mentioning all of the factors involved, but here are a few salient points.

Fleets (as well as various troop-types) are necessary to colonise and invade. You can create new customised ship classes using a mix of weapons, engines, etc. Subordinates can be assigned to lead fleets (or planets, or become ambassadors, etc). These individuals have their own personalities. To maintain loyalty you may wish to reward (bribe?) you minions. Your subordinates have a tremendous effect on affairs so you'll need to be careful who you appoint to what job.

Antennas can be used to spy on other empires. They need to be constructed in strategically useful areas. Ark Ships are useful in transporting people and materials for colonisation or in trade (using any of the 20 available products). There is a full economic structure. Taxation, balance of trade, subsidies, population control, price indexes and commodity levels all play a big part as do potential embargoes protecting your precious levels of trade in one particular commodity. Politics is important; you need to remain popular and win regular elections to stay in power.

Reports are many and varied. From Fleet Reports which inform you of its progress, to Planetary Reports that give you masses of data (population, stability, technology level, moral infrastructure, etc).

Generally, the graphics are in various shades of grey which give a classical, corporate, Apple Macintosh look (there are colour endgame screens) while the sound produces some excellent classical pieces. Wonderful stuff.

Even with the smooth interface, you will find *Imperium* has a shallow learning curve. However, once you are familiar with the set-up you'll have a ball trying to balance the many related factors which will ensure your survival and success. In a word, absolutely-bloodybrilliant.

STRATAGY 96%

PC (also Amiga, C64)

BAD BLOOD

Origin/Mindscape

Utilising a similar system to his successful *Times of Lore* release, Chris Roberts has taken a post-holocaust world as the setting for *Bad Blood*.

Coming on four disks, with a 20-page manual, reference card, Thales Comprehensive Guide to Beasts and Savages of the Plains and a clip-on radiation detection badge, *Bad Blood* takes you to a world populated by the survivors of a nuclear war. They fall into two groups, humans and mutants (hence the *Bad Blood* bit). Rumours have been filtering down to the mutant camp that the humans, equipped with superior hardware, are about to launch a major offensive to wipe out the mutant population. It is your task to leave your mutant home and wander the barren wastes to try to find a way to stop the slaughter.



After the excellent introductory sequence showing the fall and rise of civilisation, you are presented with the mutant leader's appeal for aid in this time of uncertainty. You are able to pick one of three characters to play with. After which the game shifts to the play mode — a look-down view with pseudo 3-D buildings and characters.

The action is viewed via an abandoned TV screen. The TV's controls double for TALK, EXAMINE, USE, OPTIONS, GIVE and INVENTORY commands. Menus and text windows pop up when required. Talking to a character is invoked by standing next to someone and accessing the TALK command. A menu of possible questions are listed. This menu grows with experience as characters talk about new subjects. So if one chap mentioned 'monsters' that subject would be added to the TALK menu. You could then ask somebody else about 'monsters' later on.





Weapons, food (fission chips?) and other items can be found lying around. Bumping into them picks them up.



Bad Blood is an enjoyable, simplified, action-oriented RPG. The background tunes (via Roland, Adlib and Game Blaster soundcards) add atmosphere, as do the effective VGA graphics displaying a batch of monsters, mutants, the wreckage of old cities, etc. Definitely one to unwind with after a hard stint playing *Ultima VI*.

RPG 81%

WHAT NOW?

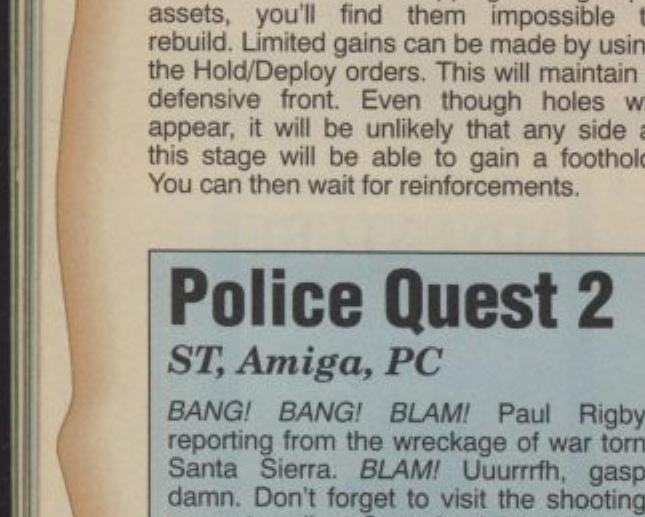
It's good to see so many letters streaming into the column. My poor carrier pigeons don't know what's hit them! Things are becoming crowded up here, pigeon-wise. Though Lior Meiry, from Israel, has some advice: 'If those pigeons really bother you, some spray must be effective — only make sure it's ozone friendly. God I hate pigeons!' I was thinking more along the lines of some ozone friendly hand-grenades! Actually, they're quite a friendly lot — if a little smelly. Ozone friendly air freshener anyone?

Russia
C64, PC

For the Soviet player, be advised that you should retire and retreat as much as possible. The Germans will run out of steam soon enough. After this happens a methodical offensive (picking off German units, one at a time) should help ensure victory. The German player should not be over ambitious. After the initial offensive, it is imperative to keep German losses at under three Korps per week. Stop Army Group South at Odessa. Ground artillery, air support and divisional reinforcements should be maintained in the same percentage as initially shown. Beware of stripping the group's assets, you'll find them impossible to rebuild. Limited gains can be made by using the Hold/Deploy orders. This will maintain a defensive front. Even though holes will appear, it will be unlikely that any side at this stage will be able to gain a foothold. You can then wait for reinforcements.

Police Quest 2
ST, Amiga, PC

BANG! BANG! BLAM! Paul Rigby reporting from the wreckage of war torn Santa Sierra. *BLAM!* Uuurrrfh, gasp damn. Don't forget to visit the shooting range to adjust Sonny's sights. His gun will be far more accurate. Dust everything for fingerprints. Call for backup, wave your hand gun in their faces and identify yourself as a police officer during felony arrests — it's the proper procedure. Always re-question witnesses, you may obtain info the second time around...*BOOM* Paul Rigby, News at TGM, war torn Santa Si*BLAM!* — urgh.

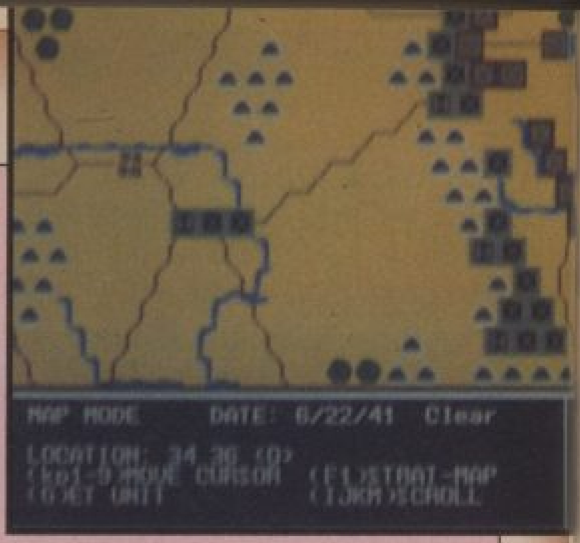


The Magic Candle
PC

Would I be waxing lyrical if I suggested that you take two wizards and as many chaps with money-making professions as possible? Probably. But would I risk getting on your wick if I then added that you should have your hunter hunt in the outdoors to increase his skill which will cut down dungeon ambushes? Yes? Hmm. What if I offered to quit with the candle puns? Right — next, please!

Neuromancer
Amiga, C64 & PC

Anyone having problems with Greystoke should consider leaving him till later on in the game. You'll need the heavy duty Black & Decker before he can be vanquished so just back off, okay?



Second Front
PC

A wee bit of advice for this masterly piece of programming from the lads at SSI. Playing the Germans I have had success using the very first battle plan presented by General Marcks on August 5, 1941. Basically this entails a 'two blow' idea. Give limited flank cover towards the river Dvina and Leningrad in the north, while striking a second blow, south, towards Kiev. The most powerful surge should strike through the centre towards Moscow. Do not try to capture Leningrad and resist the temptation of hitting Stalingrad in the south. It will only end in tears.

Dragon Wars
C64, PC

If you must start with a new team, take a look at the pre-generated lot. They have been carefully selected with well implemented skills. Take note. For goodness sake do not, what ever you do, transfer characters from old *Bard's Tale* character disks. They will always be worse off in the new *Dragon Wars* scenario.

Reach for the Stars
Amiga, PC, C64

Playing the advanced rules, build up a new world's social environment to a habitable 40 quickly. After which the population grows. Don't spoil your off-worlders or the cost to sustain them will rise. Only raise the social environment when industrial capacity is reached and further development is impossible.

If you require an immediate research and development program, have your wealthy planets during production save 100 RPs in the global fund for each underdeveloped colony you have. This allows the minor settlements to spend RPs for your powerful planets, which are otherwise limited to 100 RPs or R&D expenditures per turn.

Gold Rush
Amiga, ST, PC

Martyn Lodge of Four Oaks, Sutton Coldfield, needs some help finding the goldmine. Let's see what we can do for you. Have you been to the outhouse (after following the mule from Fort Sutter)? Enter it and light your lantern. There should be a hole there somewhere. Nip in, move SW until you reach a large door. Once past the door, climb down the ladder and...(ta dah) one mine. To find your bro (at the end of the game), climb back up the mine shaft to the right and above the large black rock to the left. Go left to the next ladder and down. Follow the shaft down and west until big bro appears.

Starflight 2
PC

Sitting on the loo the other day, travelling at Warp Factor 6, I said to myself, Paul, if I was playing *Starflight 2* what would I do to get a good start? Well, jack in the Class 1 armaments (absolute waste of time), nip over to system Class M, next to Starport, and the Class M system at the top of the Wee Dipper for some quick cash. Really, sez I? Little did I know that I had totally forgotten about the profitable trading of Tandelovian Happy Juice to the Teeelveee (downspin edge of the cloud). Oh well, *c'est la pee.*

READER CLASSIFIEDS

WANTED

Selling a Sega Megadrive? I want one! Must be a PAL version in good condition & full working order. Will pay up to £100.00. Call 081 890 9744 after 5.15pm weekdays, anytime weekends.

Wanted any non working Atari ST/M/FM/E/ Mega. Also Amiga any condition, nothing refused. Also for sale Multi Mouse works on ST and Amiga. Swap or sell, ST506-SCSI converter card for HDrive. 0495 272092.

PC Engine, Megadrive, Nintendo, Sega, Gameboy software wanted. Will pay £7.00 to £15.00 per game. Send lists to G. Schofield, 15 Beech Road, Bedfont, Middlesex TW14 8AH or ring 081-890 9744. Also games for sale. Send SAE, don't ring.

Lynx, Gameboy & Nintendo games wanted, will pay up to £15 for ones required. Phone 081-874 5408.

FOR SALE

Spectrum 128 +2, 2 joysticks, 60 mags, £1000 worth of classic & new games (Elite, Batman 3D, Myth, Chase HQ, R-Type, Robocop, Cabal, Op Wolf, Strider, Rainbow Islands, Tetris etc.). Total value over £1300, bargain at £275. Phone Robert now on 0222 623629.

Sega Megadrive PAL, superb condition, six brilliant games incl: Super Hang-on, Golden Axe and Super Shinobi. A real bargain £199.00. Phone John in Romford (04023) 74396 now!

Famicon console with nine games and a games converter to use NES carts £100+. Other games and PC Engine games for sale if interested. Please send SAE to Kenneth Chau, 20 Carrick Road, Ayr KA7 2RB, Scotland.

Nintendo games for sale: Ikari Warriors, Ghosts & Goblins, Section Z, Excitebike. £12 each or all four for £40. Phone (081) 534 8858 after 2.00pm.

Amstrad CPC 464, mono monitor, excellent condition, hundreds of games, lots of magazines and accessories including TV modulator. All worth £750+, will sell for £350 or nearest offer. Phone (0978) 761684 after 5.30pm.

PAL PC Engine with two joypads, (one autofire); five player adaptor; GAMES; Chan and Chan, Ordyne, Ninja Warriors, Altered Beast. Boxed as new. £230. Phone Joss 0672 514243 after 6.00pm.

Commodore 64 for sale! £250 worth of games, £50 worth of computer magazines, reset switch, with pokes for most games. All worth £450, sell for £250. Phone Jason on (091) 2749675 Newcastle Upon Tyne.

Atari 520STFM. Immaculate condition, includes £225 of games (Wicked, Pipemania, Strider, Rainbow Islands etc.), mouse, 2 joysticks, joystick extension leads, 20 magazines, 40 blank disks. Everything fully boxed. Only £300. Phone (0273) 463886 any evening.

Nintendo system, £220 worth of games incl. Cobra Triangle, Track and Field II, Mario Bros 3. Also Game Boy and Tetris. Worth £430, sell the lot £200 or swop for Atari Lynx. Ring (0634) 245248.

Bargainsoft ST. Shinobi, Cosmic Pirate, Menace, Defender of the Crown, Carrier Command, UMS £5!! Waterloo, War in Mid Earth, Populous - £7!! STOS, Gravity - £10!! Call 081 674 0892 after 5pm. All originals and boxed with manuals etc.

Atari SFTM, £800 of the best games, all over 90%, Dungeon Master, Populous etc... Last 2 years of ST Action, 12 months old, boxed as new, worth £1500, all for £250. Ring (0494) 765560.

Amstrad CPC 464 games for sale. All originals eg. Batman the Movie £5.00. Send SAE's to Kim Man Li, 2 Harewood Way, Macclesfield SK11 7YF or telephone 0625 612229 after 8pm on weekdays.

Spectrum +2 plus 150 games £175 ono, plus mags. Sega, light phaser, plus 14 games £250 ono. Top titles like Rastan, Wonder Boy 3. Phone 0384 77006 James Male.

AMIGA GAMES!! Tenstar pack - ten games inc. Wizball, Amegas etc. only £50! (Worth £229). 'Run the Gauntlet' £8.00, 40 16-bit mags £20. Whole lot - £65. Phone (0842) 890588 after 5.30pm.

Scart PC Engine with 9 amazing games including R-Type, Tiger-Heli, P-47, Galga '88, Legendary Axe etc. Worth £480, will sell for £300 ono. Phone (0434) 681354, ask for Matthew.

Amiga games dirt cheap. Chase HQ, Batman, Operation Thunderbolt and Wolf, Shadow of the Beast, Hard Drivin', Ghouls n' Ghosts. 50 titles. Send stamped SAE: Shin Sakitani, 18 Heath Rise, Kersfield Road, Putney, London SW15 3HF.

Atari + Amiga software for sale, all original, £2.50 to £7.50 each. Also swap or buy orig. prg. For a free prg. send disk to: PO Box 76, 2995 zj, Heerjansdam, Holland.

Sega Megadrive for sale. Scart Megadrive inc. joypad and 3 games worth £320, sell for £200. Two months old, in very good condition. Phone 021 783 8894, ask for Norman from 4pm - 8pm.

Amstrad CPC 464 + green monitor + 3 joysticks + over 125 games. Worth over £800, will sell for £350. Write to Edward Hudson, 8 Katrine Square, Grove Hill West, Hemel Hempstead, Herts. HP2 6PF.

Sega Master system, includes two joy pads and five games: Time Soldiers, Vigilante, Thunder Blade, Space Harrier and Rastan. Cost new £205, will sell for £115 ono. For more info call Edward Gurney on 0509 239964.

Sega Megadrive. Swop for ST or Amiga or sell for a good price. Includes Golden Axe, Rambo III and Ghouls & Ghosts. Ring Will, Sheffield (0742) 352669 after 5.00pm.

PC Engine Super Grafx (Scart) + 15 games from R-Type to Gunhed, 11 months guarantee. Sell for £300. Also Sega Megadrive (PAL & Scart), 8 months guarantee, £130. Will swap Engine for Amiga. Tel. Dave on 0702 616696.

PC Engine (PAL), 6 months old, excellent condition, still boxed, 11 games including Gunhed, P-47, Bloody Wolf and many more. Worth £510, will sell for £200 ono. Tel: (0962) 882845 after 5.15pm.

CBM64, OC8-II disk drive, 2 data recorders, tape backup board, Action Replay Mk V + freeze machine, Simon's Basic, £1000 worth of games inc. Turbo Outrun. Sell for only £250! Tel: 0826 314559 (Falmouth, Cornwall).

C64c, datasette, computer box, two joysticks, £900 games including Operation Wolf, Thunderbolt, Dragon Ninja, Stunt Car Racer, Retrograde and Snare. Worth £1200, will sell for £350 ono. Ring 084421 7216 after 6pm. Also have Music Maker.

1 Megabyte Amiga A500 with 2nd disk drive, Competition Pro joystick and nearly 500 disks containing animations, utilities, Public Domain and entertainment software. All excellent condition. £590. Please telephone 0202-682195 after 5pm.

PEN PALS

Amiga contacts wanted from all over the world. 100% reply guaranteed. Send disks and list to: Don Nacey, 12 The Spinney, Papakura, South Auckland, New Zealand.

Amiga contacts wanted from all over the world. Reply 100%. Write to Ash, 8 July St., Blackburn, Lancs. BB1 1SR. Also Hi! to Bal my great mate. Please no lamers.

Amiga contacts wanted worldwide, especially coding freaks. Write to 1 Woodlands View, Trentham Road, Butterton, Newcastle, Staffs. ST5 4DY, England. Will help beginners, but the best on the Amiga preferred. Ring (0782) 643550, today.

USER GROUPS

Amiga Warriors want new contacts round the world to swap the latest stuff for Amiga. Send your lists to Captain B, PO Box 39073 - Nuzha, 73051 Nuzha, Kuwait. Latest stuff only.

FANZINES

Engine Drive - console fanzine for the PC Engine and Sega Megadrive. Includes news, reviews, tips, previews and much more. Send for the 2nd issue. Only 80p to Rowan Held, 12 Burstock Road, Putney, London SW15 2PW.

"ST Adventure Coder" - for STAC, Talespin, PAW, 68000, Basic, you name it! For adventure writers everywhere! Get Issue One - only 75p! Cheques payable to: "C. Hester", 3 West Lane, Baildon, West Yorks. BD17 5HD.

Arcade Pier, get Issue One of this great new 'zine for Amiga, ST + consoles. Make all cheques out to "Cancer Research", 50p + also an SAE + stamps. Arcade Pier, 4B Currents Lane, Harwich, Essex CO12 3DE.

Lynx Gameboy fanzine new releases tips reviews. For details send SAE to Hand Held's, 8 Faraday House, Kingsgate Road, Wembley Middlesex HA9 9AY.

MISCELLANEOUS

Datalink for Amiga to Amiga, Amiga to Atari ST, Atari ST to Atari ST. Play all your favourite games head to head. Stuntcar Racer, Populous etc. etc. Please send £6.50 to M. Gallagher, 116 Broomhill Drive, Glasgow G11 7AS, Scotland.

Sensational offer over 1000 Spectrum pokes and hundreds of C64 pokes with free instructions. Send a SAE with only £1.50 to S. Freeman, 31 Durham Crescent, Washingboro, Lincoln LN4 1SF. Hurry while stocks last!

Hey you! Ever wondered how the millionaires of the world made it? Are you in need of money? Then send an SAE to me at 80, Park Street, Swinton, Lancs. M27 1AU. Go ahead, write!

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TX: 031 June 90;: Crikes! Thalamus Rally revealed!Don Bluth — the man and a load of incredibly neat games! What's the bedroom of the future like? We reveal all!
TX: 032 July 90: Dredd-ful cover! The Mega City lawman's game sneak-previewed! Bullfrog Flooded out!! Plus: Mel Croucher on video-phones, Rigby on flight sims and a very big joystick indeed!!!

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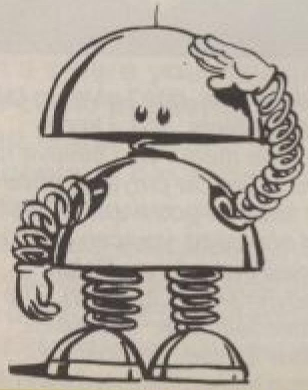
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**A reduced Lettuce Page this month, so just enough space to say there's £50 for the best letter sent to:
NEWSFIELD, TGM LETTUCE, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1JW.**

OFFER ADVICE

Dear Lettuce
Recently my son was contacted by telephone out of the blue by someone asking if he was interested in some Mega Drive games at a much-reduced price. We became suspicious when the boy concerned told us that we would be unable to ring his number because the telephone was faulty!

I tried to devise a fair method of safeguarding both parties involved and I came up with the enclosed letter. It may be in the interest of TGM readers to use it when dealing with unknown individuals!

Tony Norris, Manchester M9 3BT.
PS: Needless to say we did not get our £10 Mega Drive games and the cheque was stopped.

Dear Sir
Re: Recent telephone conversation and the cheap software you are offering.

Because I did not want to send such a large amount of money without some sort of security, I have enclosed a post-dated cheque for the agreed amount.

If I do not receive the games by the date on the cheque I will know that you have changed your mind and I will stop the cheque. If the games are received, the cheque will clear normally. I think this method is the safest for both of us. If you do not have a bank account and would like to put the cheque into a trusted friend's or a family account then just sign the back of the cheque."

HAND-HELD QUIZ

Dear TGM
I have two questions for you.

1) Is it worth selling my Sega Master System to buy an Atari Lynx or a Game Boy?

2) Will there be loads of software around for both hand-helds in future years, or will they just be forgotten?

The most I can spend is £160, and I am looking for something portable. Can you advise me which is the better buy.

Craig Armstrong, Glasgow G66 4EF.

Obviously, some consoles will be forgotten but the two you mention, the Game Boy and the Lynx, look like being around for some time. The Lynx is officially available in the UK now (at £179.95), and the Game Boy gets its UK launch in September (under £100) along with a plethora of red-hot titles. For carrying around, the Game Boy is the better — it's much smaller and the batteries last longer. There's also more software out for the Game Boy now, and it's all pretty good. The Lynx's capabilities are obviously better, but we've only seen five games for it. You will have to playtest both to discover which suits you the best. Buying one without seeing the other could lead to disappointment.

I STILL HAVEN'T FOUND...

Dear TGM
Where, oh where, oh where, can I get hold of *Psycho Soccer* (as reviewed in TGM030)? I've been collecting football games ever since I first played *Match Day* on an old battered Spectrum. I thought *Kick Off* was good, but *Psycho Soccer* looks like it will fulfil all my footballing dreams.

Phil King, Clee Hill, Shropshire.



Oh dear, Phil, don't give up taking the tablets. Still, I know what you mean, and believe me Psycho Soccer *plays as good as it looks. If you want to get hold of a copy, you can get it via mail order from: Robin Candy/Warren Lapworth, The Games Machine, The Keep, Ludlow Castle, Shropshire. Please make cheques payable to* Rob 'n' Wozza Holdings (Loadsadosh Inc) *for £19.99.*

Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

CORRESPONDENTS

■ ***From around the world, TGM readers write to lettuce know what's happening in their area. This month we visit Israel, from where Lior Meiry writes.***

■ Despite being a small nation, Israel consumes a surprisingly large amount of hardware and software. And, unlike other countries, the computer market started during 1981 with the VCS consoles and later the ZX81.

Today, the number of 8-bit users has dropped. The Amiga reached us in 1985 and was, until recently, imported by a company called Tadiran. Amiga is a very respected name here. The Atari ST has unfortunately failed and importers Aram seem less willing to branch out. Both formats are easily out numbered by the PC. Most PCs are clones of the primitive CGA variety. VGA is available but not widely used.

Consoles are fairly successful. Apart from surviving VCS users, the Sega Master System has been around since mid-1987, and is doing well. BUG, its importers, managed to sell 7,000 units during the first year (an enormous quantity for Israel). PC Engine, Mega Drive, Lynx and Neo-Geo are all names that no-one has heard here.

The local software/hardware industry is geared towards high-end applications and industrial uses. Bazbosoft!, authors of *Photon Paint I* and *II*, are from Tel-Aviv and there are a large number of active user groups — one group in Haifa unites some 300 Amiga owners.

Coin-ops are a relative success, although the machines are often in bad shape. Many arcades store extremely new titles for around 17p a game.

My main complaints are pricing and attitude. Everything costs a bundle: an Amiga costs around £670 and software from £15 to £85. This pricing policy leads to a market dominated by pirates. Attitude is another thing. Israelis don't care about software houses, authors and labels. They just want to have fun — this immature way of thinking really annoys me. But, overall, there's enough games action around here to keep anyone going for ages!

WIN TEN CARS!*

*Not real ones, you dingbat!

ENTER THE FAST LANE WITH ACCOLADE!

WIN A VERY SPECIAL CAR INDEED!

There's nothing more exciting than zooming down the M1 in your Ferrari, with a leggy blonde at your side and the wind blowing through your hair. In fact, it's just as much fun in your Porsche, isn't it? Only one problem, most of us can't even get a leggy blonde, never mind the Porsche or Ferrari — and that's where your favourite magazine (and Accolade) can come in useful. As the adverts imply, all you need is the car and you're halfway to getting the girl.

Accolade have the cars in *The Duel: Test Drive II* (in fact they've got lots of other rad cars on the *Supercars* and *Muscle Cars* PC, Amiga and C64 accessory disks), and the wind and sun can be supplied by the *European* and *Californian Challenge* scenery disks. All you need is a Spectrum, Amstrad, C64, Amiga, ST or PC. (Sorry, but we can't supply the girl.)

YES, YES, GET ON WITH IT

Even if you haven't got a computer, you can still simulate the action thanks to these great prizes. To celebrate the success of the accessory disks, Accolade are giving away a very special prize in the form of TEN perfect metal models of the sporty classic 1965 car, the Ford AC Cobra (you'll find the Cobra on the *Muscle Cars* disk). The Cobra presentation car is not only rather smart, you can also lift the bonnet to check out the engine, use the steering wheel to move the wheels, open and shut the doors, and it all comes mounted on a plinth! It'll impress your chums no end (and makes for a useful pick-up line: 'Wanna come back to much place and see my Cobra?').

I FANCY THAT!

It's very simple to win one of these sought-after model cars. Just solve the wordsearch below, in which there are ten *Duel*-related words. Ring each one, fill in your name and address on the coupon and wazz it in the post to: NEWSFIELD, COBRA MUSCLE CAR COMPO, TGM, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1JW. Entries here by August 23, first ten correct entries plucked from the 'trunk' win. Good luck!

WORDS TO FIND:

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L	R	A	F	E	C	L	R	U	E	E	U
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The Games machine

NEXT MONTH

THERE'S SOMETHING SPECIAL HAPPENING IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF TGM. MAKE SURE YOU'RE PART OF IT...

AMSTRADOPOLIS

Hold the front page! Rumours abound that Amstrad are set to launch a new console and two new games machines... can this be? Explosive reviews of the machines next month (if they exist, of course).

THE DEVIL INSIDE

Pop down to your local arcade and you'll doubtless encounter numerous coin-op cabinets containing consoles and computers rather than high-spec dedicated hardware. TGM checks out the hot slots.

PLAYING FOR FREE

Why pay £20+ for a game when you can pick up some very exciting titles for next to nothing in the public domain? The TGM guide to what's hot and what's not.

PLANES, TRAINS AND AUTOMOBILES

Entertainment on the move is already possible with the Game Boy and Lynx — however, many transport companies are planning to incorporate dedicated gaming hardware into their vehicles. Take a ride into the future.

HI HO SILVER AWAY...

CD-I and CD-ROM are claimed to be the next big thing. Machines awaiting the future silver medium are either in production or already available. Read the TGM no-nonsense guide to what's happened and what's happening.

■ PLUS ■

***Mercenary II* survival guide ■ Pick of the sticks ■ Console report from Japan ■ Home arcade cabinets ■ The Richard Monteiro style-guide to shirts ■ The Warren Lapworth guide to high collars ■ Pages of previews and power-packed game reviews ■**

DON'T MISS IT!

ALL DEPARTMENTS ***The Games Machine, Newsfield, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1JW (0584) 875851.*** *EDITORIAL* **Consultant Editor:** Richard Monteiro **Deputy Editor:** Richard Eddy **Sub Editor:** Dominic Handy **Staff Writers:** Robin Candy, Mark Caswell, Warren Lapworth **Editorial Assistant:** Viv Vickress **Editorial Director:** Oliver Frey *PRODUCTION* **Production Manager:** Jonathan Rignall **Design:** Ian Chubb **Reprographics:** Matthew Uffindell *(supervisor)* Robert Millichamp, Tim Morris, Jeni Reddard, Robb Hamilton **Photography:** Michael Parkinson *ADVERTISING* **Group Advertisement Manager:** Neil Dyson **Advertisment Assistants** Jackie Morris Joanne Lewis **Group Promotions Executive:** Richard Eddy **Mail Order:** Carol Kinsey. *Subscription rates available from main address.* Designed and typeset on Apple Macintosh II computers running *Quark Xpress* and *Adobe Illustrator 88*, with systems support from Digital Print Reprographics, Wirral Business Centre, Merseyside. Colour origination by Scan Studios, Islington Green, London N1. Printed in England by **BPCC Business Magazines (Carlisle) Ltd**, Newtown Trading Estate, Carlisle, Cumbria CA2 7NR — a member of the BPCC Group. **Distributed by Comag**, Tavistock Road, West Drayton, Middlesex.

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UNCLE MEL'S TRIVIA QUIZ

1) What percentage of all software used in the UK is pirated?
2) In the 1911 sci-fi movie One Hundred Years Later, what feature of our everyday life shocked the scientist when he came out of suspended animation in 2011?
3) You can improve the audio quality of a CD by up to 20% simply by inking the inside and outside rims with green felt-tip. True or false?
4) Who has just used Gerry Anderson's creations for a disco single?
5) Why are Romanians having trouble using today's computer keyboards?
6) In the Sensible Software/Palace promos, who is playing against Bjørn Borg in *International 3-D Tennis*: a) Jean Paul Gaultier, b) Pope John Paul II, c) Jean Paul Sartre?
7) In *Time Bandits*, who played Robin Hood, God, Napoleon, the Trojan King and the Fireman?
8) What have London commuters, Tynesoft, Grandslam and a vasectomy knife got in common?
9) Spot the odd one out: Arnold Schwarzenegger, Stephen Hendry, Sigourney Weaver, Salman Rushdie.
10) How many pop singles can you fit on the single CD fitted to the new Nimbus Jukebox: a) under 50, b) between 50 and 150, c) over 150?
11) Which two software houses appear in this tabloid headline: A Ham Slut In Vice Net.
12) Which micro is used for the police identikit system for car spotting? What program does it run?
13) Which book title has been published the most times in computer disk form?
14) Magnetic Scrolls have released *Wonderland*. What two books inspired the game, who wrote them, and who illustrated them?
15) Which baddies appear in both *Escape From Singe's Castle* and *Tusker*?
16) Which baddies appear in both *Escape From Singe's Castle* and *Popeye*?
17) Where would you find Arnie Schwarzenegger in bed with Timbo Dalton?
18) Why does Prince Charles enjoy attending the All Formats Computer Fair?

ANSWERS

1) Over 50%, now stop it!
2) A woman Prime Minister.
3) True! It stops the laser beam leakage that corrupts audio data. (Er, find this a bit difficult to believe — Ed.)
4) Gerry Anderson. (Er, we think he means MC Parker, but that's Mel for you — Ed.)
5) Before Christmas, private citizens were not allowed to type!
6) Jean Paul Sartre.
7) John Cleese, Sir Ralph Richardson, Ian Holme, Sean Connery and Sean Connery again.
8) They all went down the tubes.
9) Salman Rushdie is not part of an Activision tie-in (yet — Ed).
10) B) Over 150.
11) Thalamus and Incentive.
12) An Apple Mac running *Motor Fit*.
13) The Bible.
14) Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Through the Looking Glass, illustrated by Tenniel.
15) The Mudmen.
16) The Goons.
17) Domark's *Heroes* compilation.
18) Because of talking to so many weeds and vegetables.


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